Commentary
Volume Sixty-four, Number Five, November 1977

CARTER VS. ISRAEL
What the Polls Reveal

Seymour Martin Lipset & William Schneider

THE STRANGE CASE OF GEORGE F. KENNAN / Edward N. Luttwak

A NOTE ON THE NEW EQUALITY / Eugene J. McCarthy

THE EXAMPLE OF ISAAC BABEL / Simon Markish

WHY SPINOZA WAS EXCOMMUNICATED / Yirmiahu Yovel

THE MAHLER EVERYONE LOVES / Samuel Lipman

PHILIP ROTH: SONNY BOY OR LENNY BRUCE? / Pearl K. Bell

BOOKS IN REVIEW: Paul H. Weaver / Steven Schnur / Eric M. Breindel / Stephen Miller / Seth Cropsey

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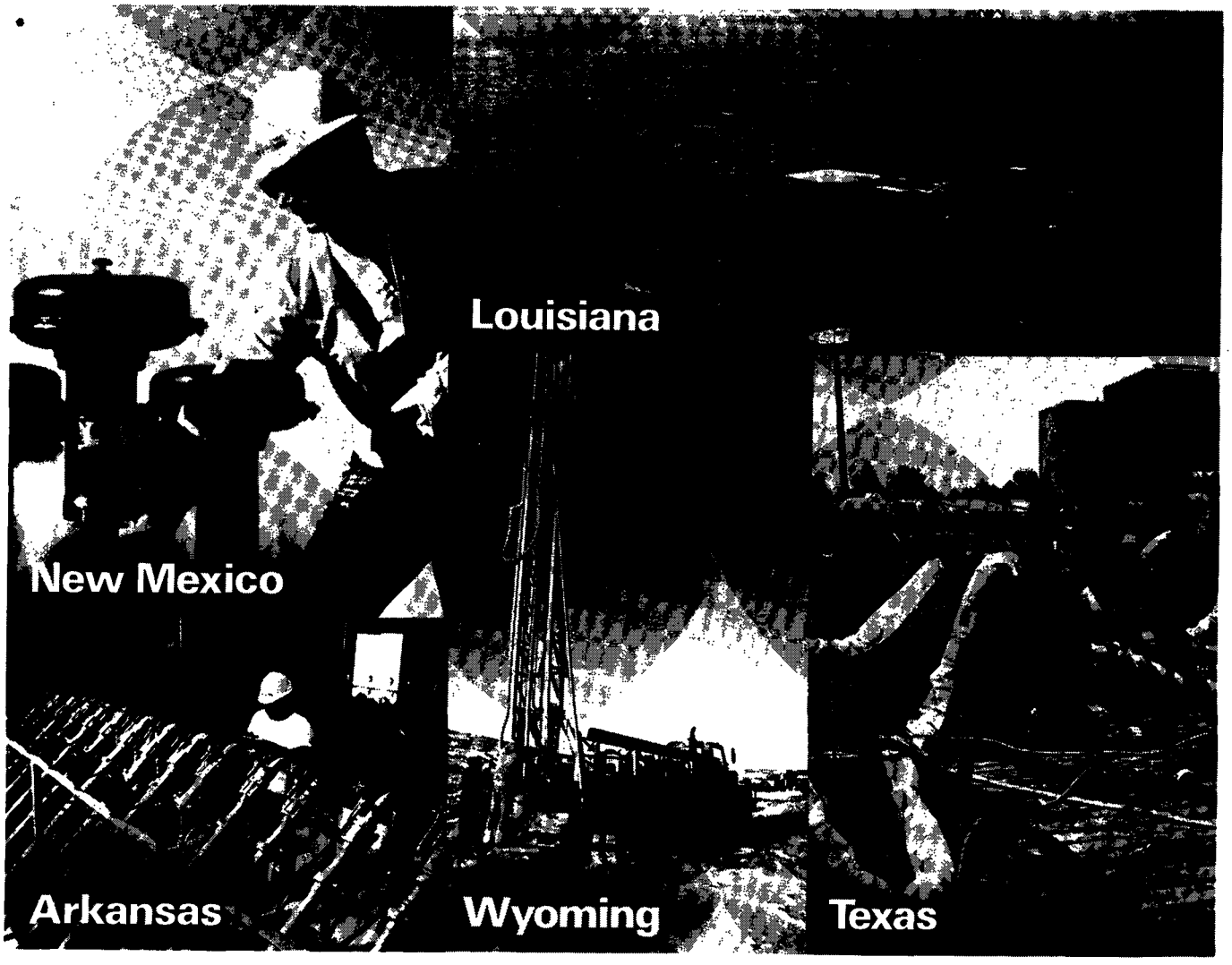

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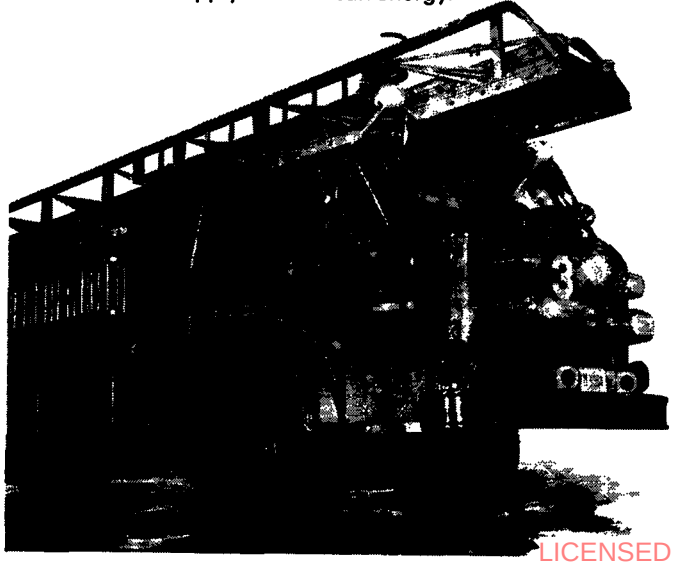

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Commentary

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Associate Editor: Brenda Brown
Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur
Comptroller: Philip Shamis
Production Manager: Bruce Lodi
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Letters from Readers

Looting & Liberal Racism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to COMMENTARY for publishing Midge Decter's article, "Looting and Liberal Racism" [September]. Never before, to my knowledge, has any writer expressed so succinctly and so well the bankruptcy of the prevailing liberal ideology as applied to racial matters. The basic points made by Miss Decter need to be repeated constantly as an antidote to the sentimental and patronizing clichés issued by politicians and the press.

The persistent dogma that crime in ghetto areas is the result of racism and socioeconomic deprivation is the equivalent of denying to an entire racial group the benefits and burdens of the principle of individual responsibility (and individual dignity) that is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition. No one can have self-respect in a society which holds that he is not responsible for his conduct.

A great deal of the unemployment that is said to be at the root of the problem would be quickly ended if the minimum wage were repealed with respect to everyone under twenty-five and if the young men concerned really wanted to work. As Miss Decter says, there are plenty of jobs that go begging because the unemployed do not want them. . . .

A point which Miss Decter does not adequately emphasize is that the criminal law was not effectively enforced in the areas affected by the looting. This, too, is a form of racism. One suspects that if the looting had moved into the silk-stocking district, stronger measures would have been taken.

The answer does not lie in more federal spending programs (the standard liberal solution to every problem), since government handouts only reinforce the sense of dependency and irresponsibility. What is required is a modest amount of intellectual honesty in thinking about this difficult subject. Midge Decter's article is a good start.

JOSEPH F. JOHNSTON, JR.
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's brilliant piece on liberal racism cuts through and defogs the haze of clichés that purport to explain, understand, and interpret this summer's power-blackout riots.

We are apparently in the throes of a new kind of turmoil, a revolution of "falling" expectations—*ours*. The non-demands of the guilty white establishment reflect its patronizing paternalism, and, as Miss Decter concludes, its racism.

How ironical.

MARK GOODSON
Goodson-Todman Productions
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's article was a gem; it ought to have wide circulation. . . . Much of the trouble in the whole area of race relations, education, etc. stems from an army of well-meaning teachers who, unfortunately, were exposed to pseudo-scientific courses or so-called "Black Education" taught in schools of education. These courses imply with little subtlety that blacks are different, that blacks have different standards, thus delivering the unspoken statement that blacks must be trained differently. It is racism reinforced by higher education in schools of education.

Incidentally, I happen to be black.

ARTHUR C. BANKS, JR.
President, Greater Hartford Community College
Hartford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It's a pity that Midge Decter made no reference to Brooklyn District Attorney Eugene Gold's analysis of the arrests following the July 13 and 14 looting. Perhaps the article was written before the publication of his findings, which certainly provide statistical support of her thesis.

Arrest and indictment are, of course, not proof of guilt; but they undoubtedly present a valid profile of the guilty. Besides, while some of those arrested might not be guilty, is their legal innocence only the result of not having had sufficient time or not having yet found anything that they wanted?

I met one man who was arrested. I have no reason to doubt his claim that he had only just arrived at the scene and had done nothing wrong; but he did not offer any reason for going there. It is impos-

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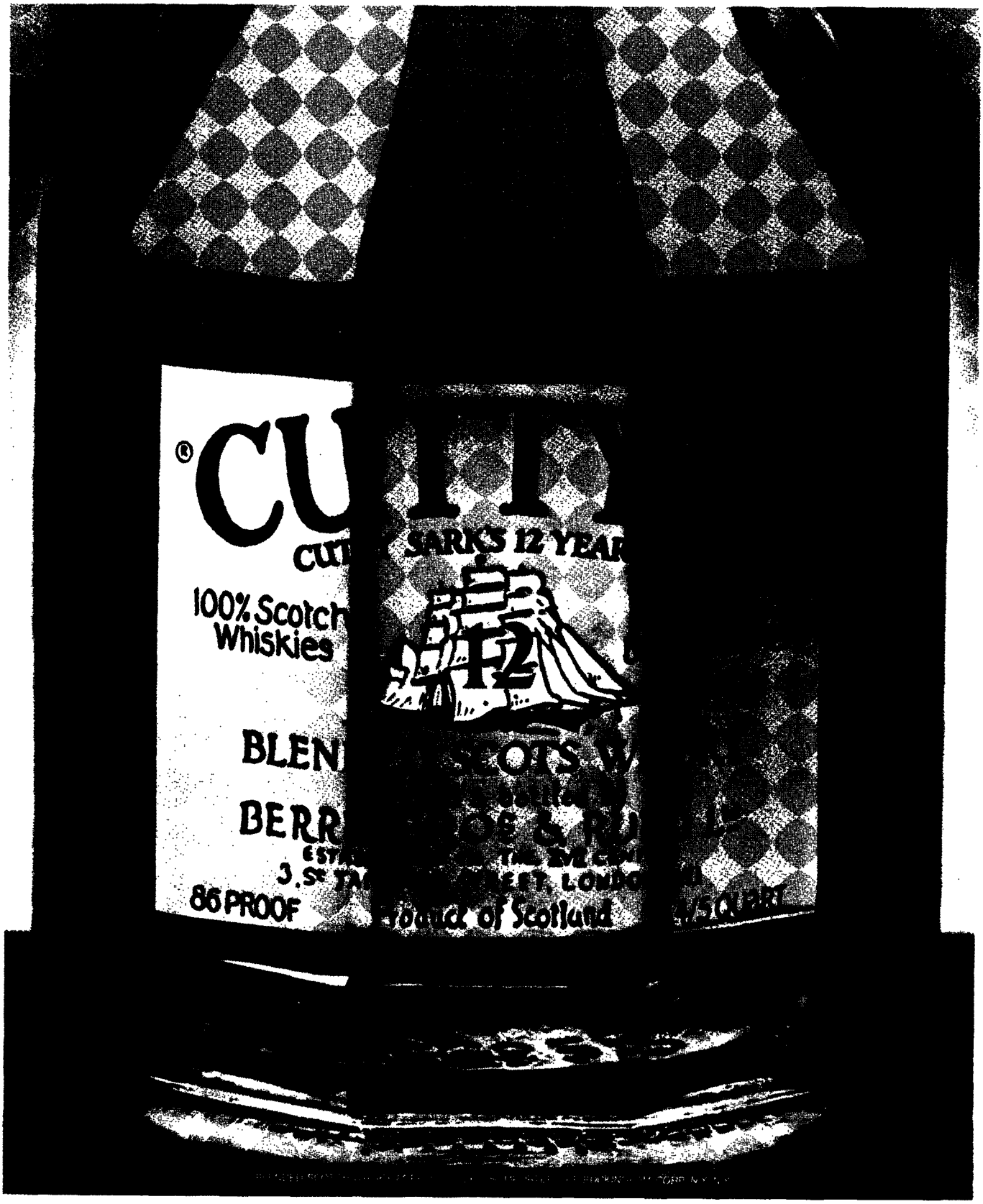

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sible not to wonder what would have happened if he had had time to get into the spirit or if he had seen anything he liked.

HENRY S. GLAZIER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Midge Decter's article . . . is right on target. . . . The same situation exists today with respect to "women's rights" (I was formerly on the national board of NOW, the National Organization for Women). With far more laws on the books prohibiting sex discrimination than are being made use of, many women are still calling for special programs and privileges. Some men, too, are changing from the "race-discrimination-guilt" lane to the "sex-discrimination-guilt" lane, driving down the road to confession and penance. Almost worse than liberal racism is the liberal sexism which is promoting public-sponsored and -funded programs to teach women to "be assertive." Of all put-downs, the idea that you have to be taught by the government to think well enough of yourself to speak and act in your own behalf is the worst. I know that not all the laws are perfectly enforced, but laws cannot be enforced without the action of individuals who have a complaint and who have tenacity and who understand that freedom is not free.

ELIZA PASCHALL
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter correctly rejects the traditional liberal instant analysis of the July 13 New York riots, but her own explanation is equally unconvincing: ". . . all those young men went on their spree of looting because they had been given permission to do so . . . by all the papers and magazines, movies and documentaries . . . which had for years and years been proclaiming that race and poverty were sufficient excuses for lawlessness."

Frankly, I . . . doubt that young Harlem's mores are much affected by the New York *Times* Op-Ed page, or even by such sympathetic undertones as may creep into television network coverage of a Black Panther leader's murder trial. More plausible causes, I believe, are more immediate experience, e.g., Mayor Lindsay's gentle handling of the earlier New York riots, or judges and legislators who sentence sixteen-year-old murderers as sixteen-year-olds rather than as murderers, and are otherwise lenient to crimes of violence.

Certainly those officials, and their constituents, were influenced by liberal media, and vice versa. And so? From a child, whose judgment cannot be trusted, its parents may wish to keep all dangerous nonsense; but who is to keep it from the city's judges?

Ultimately one must trust the citizenry to sort out the truth, for lack of alternative. There is reason to be sanguine. Even a liberal often comes to a new view of law and order at the point of a hoodlum's gun. . . . The hard way to learn, surely, but more convincing than a dozen issues of *Time* magazine. . . .

Moreover, without some hard evidence, the liberal media cannot be blamed for a rioter's (inflated, if anything) self-image. The idea that any editorial much affects a young tough's character is preposterous. Perhaps documentaries using race and poverty as an explanation for crime (or trying to) have a bad cumulative effect, and, passing from the specifically liberal media to the media in general, so possibly do violent "blaxploitation" films. But in the light of our splendid American prejudice in favor of free expression, evidence condemning such entertainments should be real and convincing.

ROBERTO ALAZAR
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Midge Decter has articulated a point of view that so many New Yorkers must surely feel, as I do, to be their own. As a New York City high-school teacher, I have seen young blacks leave the twelfth grade knowing they are doomed to the welfare line despite their "diplomas." Would that our liberal politicians took Miss Decter's sharp analysis to heart.

HARVEY WILKES
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . What Midge Decter misses is that looting is only one aspect—and not the most important, since it affects property, not life—of lawlessness, which is rampant in the United States. Lawlessness expands as much as it can, up to the limits at which it is constrained morally and/or physically. Lawlessness in the United States is higher than almost anywhere else in the world. Why? The answer is astonishingly simple: because our moral and/or physical constraints against lawlessness are among the weakest in the world. Our parental guidance, our school system, our crime-prevention system, and our law-enforcement system are about the most lenient in the world.

HENRY GREBER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter is to be commended for the honesty and insight of her commentary on the rioting and looting which accompanied New York's recent blackout. It is indeed true that "liberal racism," as she calls it, compounds the problems of slum dwellers by undermining their self-esteem and denying them the *right* to assume responsibility for their behavior, behavior which in no sense can be justified or even "explained" by the miserable conditions of poverty in which they live.

I'm curious, however, as to how far Miss Decter would be willing to carry her approach. I'm not referring, of course, to the philistine charge that will undoubtedly be leveled, that her argument leads to the view that poor people are poor because they deserve to be poor. My reference is rather to the applicability of her analysis to realms beyond the United States: for example, to the Soviet Union.

Is it not a fact that no outside force imposed Soviet totalitarianism on the Russian people, that in a profound sense they are "responsible" for it, that it answers to a fundamental inadequacy in their culture, their history, their traditions, in short, in *them*?

If this be true, then totalitarianism represents not some coercive external condition, alien and opposed to the past and present nature of the Russian people, but rather the objective correlative to their own submissive selves.

It would follow that the totalitarian conditions which prevail in Russia no more explain or justify the servility, the renunciation of self-worth and human dignity, which are and have been the usual behavior of the Russian people in respect to their overlords, than do slum conditions explain or justify the blackout riots.

It would also follow that those of us who fear totalitarianism, and who have promoted elaborate theories which depict it in almost mystical terms as some monstrous inan-

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*imate force against which all internal resistance is folly, in order to "explain" the virtually unanimous obedience which it elicits from the people over whom it rules, have actually done a disservice to those very people. This disservice is comparable to that of the "liberal racists" in that it tacitly encourages the Russian people *not* to resist and so implicitly denigrates their humanity, their ability to stand up and assert their autonomy and dignity as free men and women by overthrowing the regime which holds them in perpetual infancy. Certainly all "private" opponents of the regime in Russia—a category which probably includes a majority of the people and even a substantial section of the membership of the Communist party itself—must feel a little more comfortable in their acquiescence, knowing that the most advanced anti-Communist opinion in the West does not hold them accountable for their passivity, but instead prefers to dwell on the exclusive culpability of their regime, for which the people—obviously—are not at all responsible.*

This approach would also seem to suggest that while we are supporting the Soviet dissidents, we should also be crying shame to that vast majority of Russians who do not dissent and do not support those who do, rejecting their excuses, their supine conduct, their self-apologetics in the form of representations of the regime as infinitely stronger than it really is, and expecting of them that they risk Siberia or worse, as any decently self-respecting person ought to under such conditions.

*Is not to do otherwise to whisper sweet nihilism in *their* ears?*

TOM MILSTEIN

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's article on the riots during the New York blackout reminds me of the old saw about the partially filled glass of water: the pessimist bemoans that it is half empty, the optimist rejoices that it is half full. . . .

Miss Decter is justified in her anger against the riots. The destruction of property and looting certainly destroyed the lives, along with the fortunes, of the good and honest shopkeepers who were the victims of the disaster. . . . Insofar as the riots expressed a disregard for fellow men and for order necessary *to conduct a decent life, the glass is* half empty. . . .

[But] neither all blacks nor all the poor (nor the general run of the populace, for that matter) responded . . . to the blackout with the same disregard for the rules which Miss Decter imputes to them. First, while I would agree that a very large segment of the population of the looted neighborhoods did take part in the riots, I doubt that a majority . . . did so or that a handful of little boys, frightened by adult punishments, were the only ones who refrained. I suspect, but cannot prove, that even in looted areas the majority huddled in their apartments as afraid of the dark as Miss Decter.

In fact, if taken as a whole, the poor, black, Hispanic, middle class, and rich responded in a very orderly fashion to the crisis. The area of looting was limited. Other poor sections of the city remained quiet even after the news must have spread . . . New Yorkers responded very well, really, and in much the same manner as in 1965: they directed traffic, organized to defend themselves, accepted the inconvenience, and even enjoyed the experience. Too much is made out of incidents which were actually isolated within the range of population and area of the city. . . . In this sense, the glass is half full.

Clearly, American society has failed in many areas—especially in its responsibilities to those in grinding poverty and to many, if not most, members of visible minorities. I will submit grinding poverty as a hard, palpable fact. However, the problems faced today are not necessarily those addressed twenty years ago. I will agree that solutions apparently viable twenty years ago do not necessarily apply at this moment. However, I doubt that scrapping most postwar sociological literature and demeaning the good will in the writing will provide answers. Nor is a return to the dignity of labor and penalties for non-compliance a sufficient or efficient solution to the current malaise. . . .

The matter is much more complicated. What, for example, is dignified labor? If I do what I enjoy and I am lucky to be valued by society in general and my small group in particular, I am very, very lucky. Some jobs (and I have tried a few) do not fit my conception of productiveness or of worthiness. They are at best tedious and at

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worst loathsome. The work may benefit society, but the worker's benefit comes not from the job but the monetary outcome, and the pay is neither commensurate with the agony of the daily grind nor with the expectations of the elite which formulates both taste and expense. Miss Decter ignores the interesting statistics concerning arrested looters: a surprisingly large number of them were steadily employed.

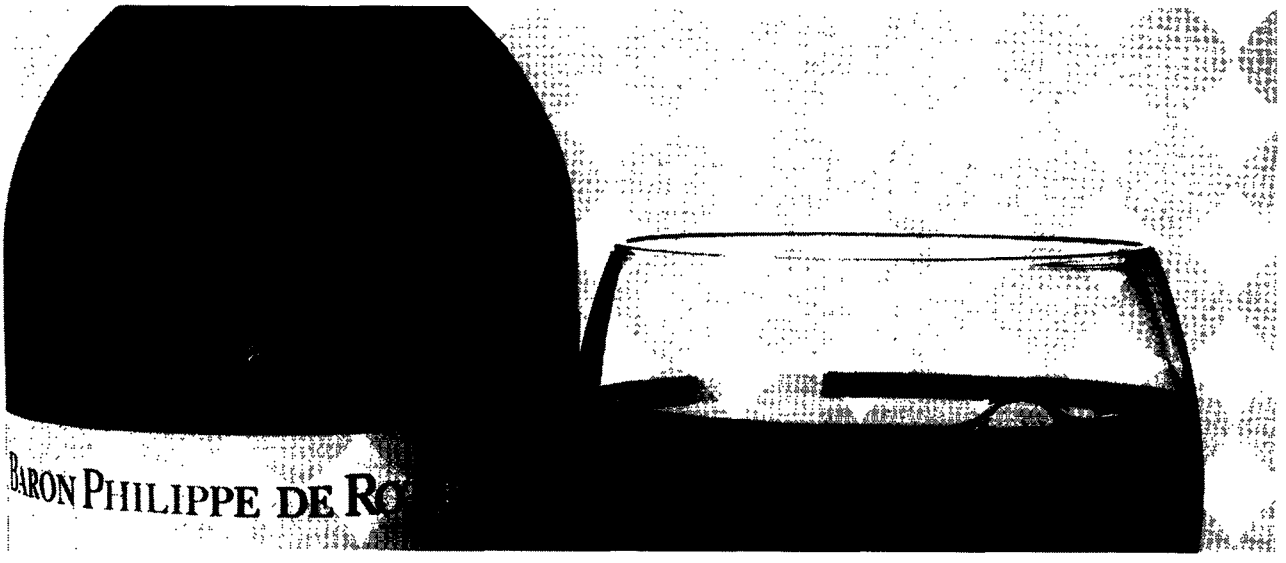
The problem may not be the way society treats the ghetto, but rather the dignity it in fact imputes to labor and to consumption. Paul Goodman's twenty-year-old analysis may well be right—these very jobs remain dead-end employment—without possibility of advancement, without expressed social acceptance, and without mind-activating interest. The riots, as Miss Decter points out, may have been no more than an attempt to break out of the ennui of life. . . .

Taken individually, each case of vandalism and looting during the riot was rather petty. That is not to say that we ought to ignore or condone the looting in any way. But any acceptance of rules of responsibility should argue for evenhanded and general application and for penalties related to the actual consequences of the act. If an individual is jailed for stealing a TV set and thus causing pain and suffering to the original owner, should not those who cause colossal misfortune be punished at least equally? If the answer is yes, then our society has failed monumentally.

Henry Ford apologizes for not having recalled automobiles before faults in them have caused death and destruction, and still draws his salary. The president of Consolidated Edison lies to the public about the causes of the blackout and remains on a job he does not seem qualified for. Airlines are castigated for forcing pilots to fly into bad weather and no changes are made. Many companies pollute and destroy the environment with only a corporate slap on the wrists. Industrial concerns expose employees to materials which cause cancer or impede reproduction without being forced to compensate the workers. I could go on, but a full list would only become a redundant account of our failure as a total society to act and be responsible not only individually but also collectively. Should we really wonder why so many want a piece of the action with the same accountability as our leaders?

The reality of the dignity of labor becomes no more than a method (motivation) to keep the corporate machine going. Keep at it, keep off the streets, keep out of the way, and above all keep from asking questions. In these terms James Baldwin is right: surrendering to the middle-class ethic (as stated, not as often acted out) does mean giving oneself over to a slavery of promise which can never in fact be realized. Work is for the poor, dignity is for the middle class.

For me, the glass is half empty, not because the poor act the way they do but because an appalled middle class is shocked into indignant and contemptuous surprise to see the poor do what we ourselves do



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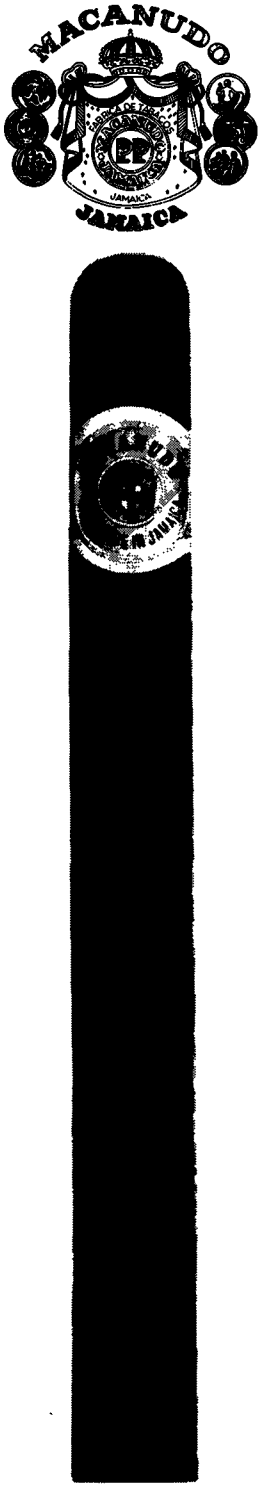

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less openly and more cynically. The malaise runs deep, but the social illness is not confined to the ghetto but spreads to Larchmont and Great Neck, to Winnetka and Highland Park. The violence wreaked on the body politic from place to place may vary; the dolorous effects are the same.

My criticism of Miss Decter's article sounds emotional and it is in many respects. It sounds simplistic as well. I do not wish here to detail a complicated and multifaceted problem, but rather to force an argument that problems in the ghetto are part of the total social situation. . . .

Of one thing I am convinced: old questions will not elicit new answers. Repetition does not negate an answer, but it does not make it right either. Finally, glib and facile assessment moments after the event cannot substitute for a sober, dispassionate analysis, based on perspectives of time and emotional distance.

MARTIN YANUCK
Spelman College
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article, Midge Decter refers to "immigrants from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, San Salvador, Haiti, and Puerto Rico . . . [who] flock here and go to any lengths not to be sent home." Miss Decter will be interested, though perhaps chagrined, to know that residents of Puerto Rico are already U.S. citizens and have the right to travel anywhere they wish in their own country.

EDWARD J. SELIGMAN
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITORS OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations on publishing "Looting and Liberal Racism" by Midge Decter. I have been waiting for such a definitive and sane analysis. Miss Decter might have taken a quotation from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch as her theme: "Human society cannot go on when moral decay is universal." . . .

[Dr.] MENAHEM STEINBERG
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter has done her usual forthright and brilliant job in . . . "Looting and Liberal Racism."

The average black, being a good citizen as well as the most common victim of black crime, does not stand to gain from the pseudo-liberal's racist downplaying of the individual's responsibility for his malefactions.

Actually this liberal racism falls into the same pattern as the use of the quota system and other devices for ethnic favoritism. They all have as their base the unfortunate assumption that blacks are an inferior group who cannot make it in an equal race with their white brothers.

CHARLES COGEN
New York City

Israel vs. the Diaspora

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As I can only thank Robert Alter for his more than generous review of my book, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* ["New York and/or Jerusalem," August], I trust it will not count as ingratitude if I choose to take issue with certain criticisms he makes of the book.

I am quite willing to accept Mr. Alter's contention that the theses on Jewish life presented in *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* are more boldly stated than scholarly caution might warrant. The book is, after all, a polemic, which is to say a form in which a measure of overstatement for the purpose of dramatizing the issues dividing one from one's adversaries is not always, I think, illegitimate. At the same time, however, my impression is that in accusing me of oversimplifying certain complex realities of past and present Jewish experience, Mr. Alter is guilty of some oversimplification himself, with the result that he occasionally misrepresents what I say or dismisses it rather too facilely. Some key, although not the only, instances:

1. Mr. Alter attributes to me the belief that Jews were able to retain their identity as a people in premodern times only because—unlike today—they lived in "a hermetically sealed Diaspora world." He asserts that if only I realized that, far from this being the case, Jews have "exhibited, throughout the lands of their exile, an absolute genius for assimilation [of elements taken from non-Jewish culture]," I could not possibly take the dim view that I do of contemporary Jewish prospects in the Diaspora. In fact, however, this is a belief I never express. On the contrary, I state several times (pp. 87,136,138) that, exactly as Mr. Alter asserts, traditional Jewish life in the Diaspora continually ab-

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I told her we were going "out on the town" for her birthday,
and she said she had nothing to wear.

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"The only gusher I'll ever see is at the movies."

Gulf Production Superintendent Bob Valentine perforates a legend. "I don't think I ever saw an oil movie where they didn't have a gusher. Everybody gets greasy, and they laugh a lot.

"But today the only gushers are in the movies, not in real life. And a good thing, too. All that oil spraying all over the landscape. All those tools and pipe flying around—a man could get killed that way.

"The fact is that wells just don't come in as gushers anymore.

The easy oil is gone

"One reason is that drilling and well-completion technology has improved. These days, we bring the oil to the surface under carefully controlled conditions, in order to avoid spillage.

"Another reason is that the easy oil is gone. We're drilling deeper—sometimes as deep as 20,000 feet. We're drilling in tough, inaccessible, out-of-the-way locations we wouldn't have attempted ten years ago.

Wet rock

"These days, an oil strike is a lot less dramatic. At the end of a successful drilling operation, your best indication of oil may be a wet rock. The oil is in the pores of the rock, and you sometimes have to do some incredible things to get it out. Stimulation with chemical solutions; fracturing at eight or ten thousand pounds' pressure; or steam injection flooding.

"These days, getting the oil out is a real challenge. But we've got the tools and the knowledge, and we'll do it."

Gulf

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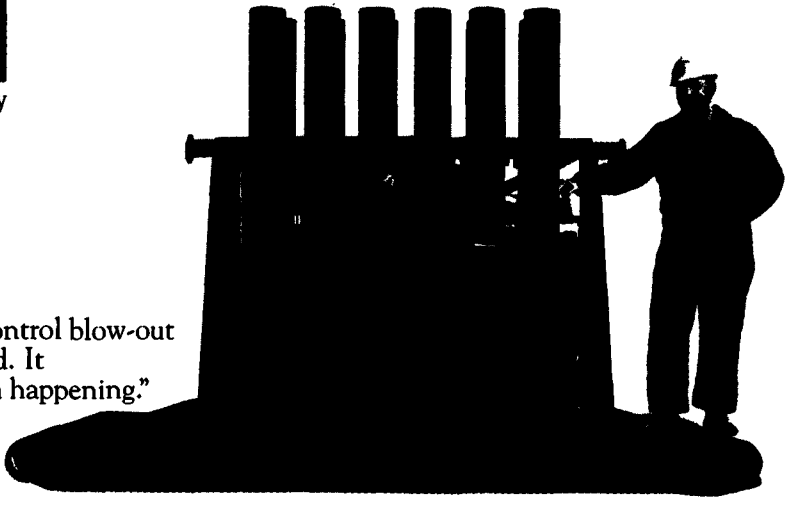
"A modern oil strike: rock with oily pores."



"This is a remote control blow-out preventer manifold. It keeps gushers from happening."

Gulf Oil Corporation

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sorbed influences from the Gentile world. The point I make in my book is simply that as long, and only as long, as Diaspora Jewry had a culture of its own, such influences were invariably transformed by it into distinctively Jewish modes of thought and behavior (is not this precisely the "genius for assimilation" of which Mr. Alter speaks?). No one denies that gefilte fish was originally borrowed by Jews from the non-Jewish cuisine of Central Europe, or that the Purim *spiel* derived from the Easter play, but no one would deny either that once borrowed these assumed a form and significance in Jewish life that they had nowhere else. What distinguishes Jewish life in the contemporary Diaspora, on the other hand (and here lies the whole thrust of my argument), is its total lack of any independent cultural framework within which such transformations can take place. When Jews in America cook hamburgers or make movies the result is not a Jewish food or a Jewish art form, which is in a nutshell why Jewish life in the Diaspora is inevitably in the process of disappearing.

2. Mr. Alter writes (fairly enough, apart from his unqualified use of the word "unqualified"):

> The chief ideological correlate of Halkin's either-or thinking both about Jewish history and about options for the future is his unqualified adherence to the old Zionist idea of normalization. . . . The only consistent and healthy position [for Israel to aspire to], Halkin contends, is to be *k'khol ha-goyim*, like all the nations: "If we had as much true culture in this country as the Albanians or Finns [Mr. Alter quotes me as writing], the Guatemalans, or Greeks, I would say *dayenu* too."
>
> This celebration of the health of the Finns strikes me as a moment when the anti-apologetic stance slips into the familiar netherworld of Jewish inferiority complexes. . . . Indeed, one might wonder whether not only the Israelis but also the Jews of the Diaspora . . . do not have a culture with a breadth and vitality hardly in evidence in the sleepy provinces of Central America or the Balkan boondocks that Halkin proposes for emulation.

But it is Mr. Alter who culturally equates the Balkans and Central America with Dogpatch, not I. I have never been in the Balkans; I once spent some time in Guate-

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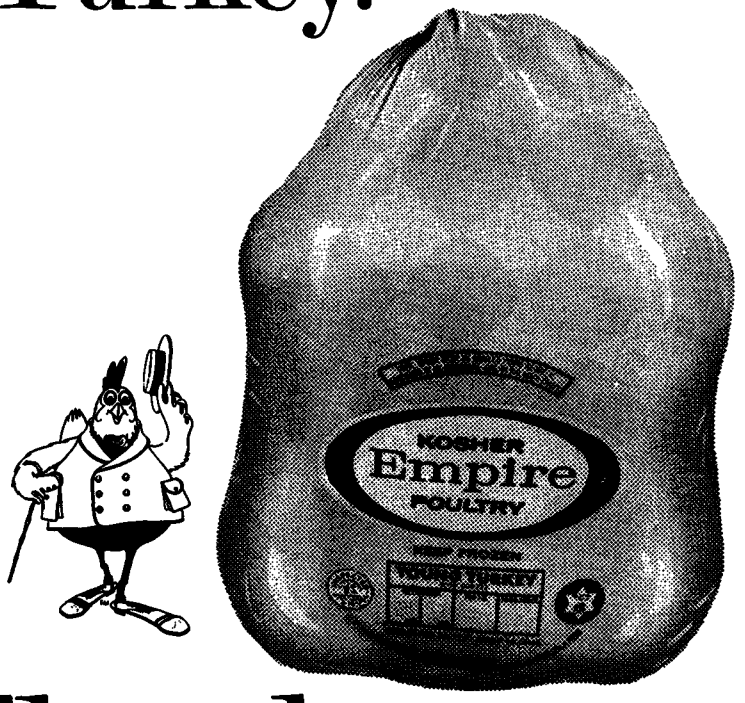

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mala, where there lived, so it seemed to me, a people of more beauty and grace than I had ever seen elsewhere. Clearly, though, the choice of countries in this passage is incidental; I could just as well have referred to Holland and Czechoslovakia. Surely there is no necessary feeling of Jewish inferiority in the realization that we in Israel today are a culturally dislocated people, a saving remnant cast together from Jewish communities all over the world, whose inner lives have been tragically ravaged in this century by assimilation, physical destruction, and the process of "Israelification" itself. "Normalization" in such a context does not mean losing anything of value that we at present have, but rather gaining something of value that we at present lack—namely, a sense of harmony and at-homeness in our environment with all that this entails in our life, manners, values, and expressive and functional arts —and that numerous other peoples less often in the headlines than ourselves possess, even if they have failed to produce world-famous professors and Nobel Prize winners.

If Mr. Alter finds more true culture in Israel than I do, I can only hope that he is the more astute observer; when he speaks of a Jewish culture possessing "breadth and vitality" in the Diaspora, however, I must confess that I am at a loss to understand what he is referring to. Who, what, where? An impressive display of Jewish scholarship and book learning among a tiny elite of Diaspora Jews, yes; but a *culture*? Apparently we mean different things by the word.

3. In disagreeing with my claim that Israel is, for social and demographic reasons, in desperate need of large-scale immigration from the West, Mr. Alter writes that

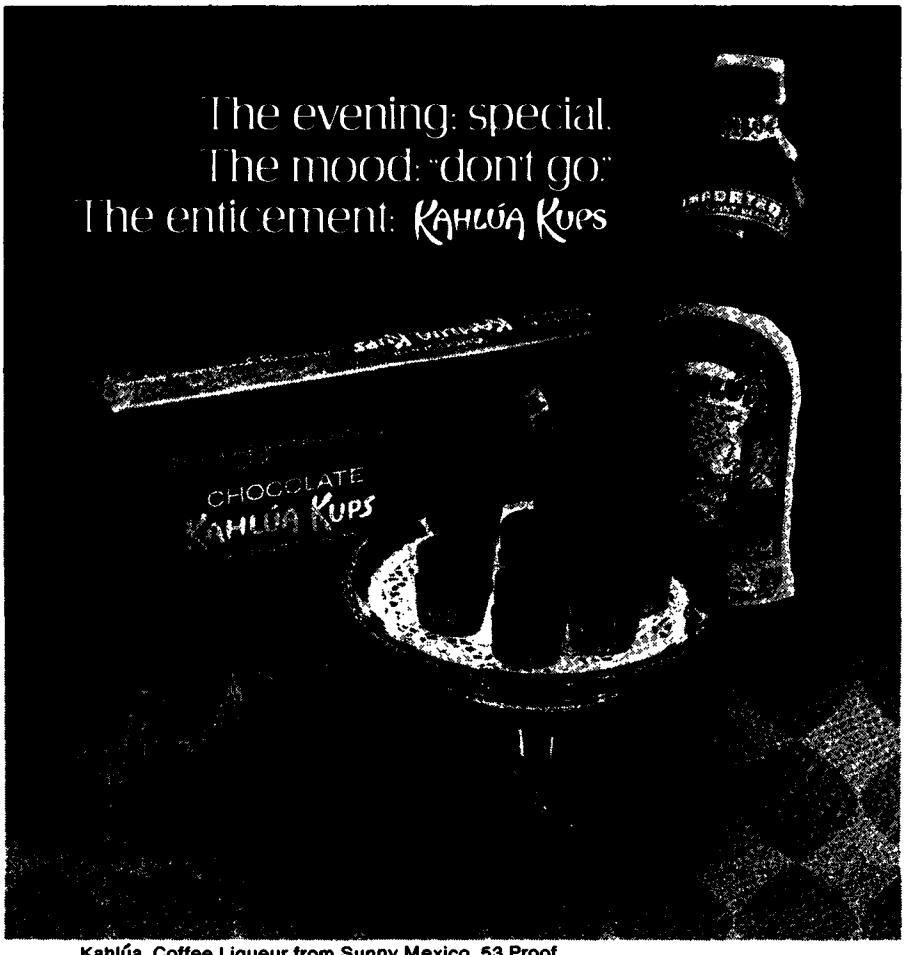
> even if we were to grant Halkin an annual immigration from America of fifteen or thirty thousand, eventually this source of new human material would dry up, with few Jews left in America except those who had chosen not to be Jews, and at that point the Israelis would still be a small minority, with a relatively anemic birth rate, in a vast sea of Arabs. . . . I do not believe that survival will be guaranteed if in the year 2000 there are six million Jews in Israel instead of a projected four million. . . . Jewish peoplehood must have a toughness and Jewish culture a resilience that do not depend on such numerical scales. . . .

Coming from someone as generally pragmatic as Mr. Alter, I find such an attitude toward numbers strangely cavalier. It is a little like saying that it is immaterial whether a person consumes 1,500 or 2,500 calories a day, since the human body should be tough enough, and the human spirit sufficiently resilient, to get by on either. One can agree that numbers are not everything; obviously, however, there is a point at which they matter, and whether Israel has a population of four million or six million Jews by the year 2000—which may mean, among other things, whether it has an Arab minority of roughly one-third or one-fifth—can be not only important but crucial.

Mr. Alter writes that "if one follows the terms of this analysis, the great influx from America would have only bought the Jewish state a few decades of breathing space before the process of its ineluctable dissolution was resumed." But even if this is so (and one hopes, of course, for an influx from other countries too), a few decades, which is to say thirty or forty years, may be precisely the critical amount of time needed for Arab attitudes toward Israel to change, for the Palestinian-Arab birth rate to drop to the level of the Jewish one, for new and currently unimaginable political constellations to emerge in the world and the Middle East, etc. I never contend in my book that Israel must hold out in the Middle East as a garrison state for eternity, nor do I believe that it could; I do suggest that it may have to do so for the foreseeable future, and that during this period numbers are one of several prime factors on which its survival is likely to depend.

Finally, a few words in response to Mr. Alter's opinion that since no instrument of persuasion, my book included,

> is going to convince large numbers of American Jews to emigrate to Israel, barring, of course, a totally unforeseeable political catastrophe in this country . . . Halkin's argument becomes a mask for apocalyptic bleak-



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ness: Diaspora Jewry is said to be doomed, and since massive immigration from America is extremely unlikely, Israel is in all probability doomed as well.

I must admit that I am not particularly sanguine either about the prospects for large-scale immigration to Israel from the West or about the long-term chances for Israel's survival. Israel was created against heavy odds and will in my opinion have to do its best to continue existing against them for a long time to come. That being the case, however, one may properly ask which course is likely to have the more apocalyptically bleak consequences: to comfort ourselves as Jews with the thought that both the Diaspora and Israel are privy to a dispensation of immortality, or to see our historical situation for what it is and to seek, without exaggerated expectations of success, to remedy it.

From its inception, Zionism—or rather, its more clear-minded proponents, since the Zionist movement never lacked its Panglosses either—enjoyed one great advantage, namely, its determination to tell the truth to the Jewish people, as unpalatable as the truth was. It was this that made classical Zionism at once a curiously harsh and hopeful doctrine: harsh in its prediction of what the Jewish future held in store if a revolution in Diaspora attitudes did not take place, hopeful that if Diaspora Jews were confronted with the facts, such a revolution, if not probable, was at least not impossible. My own feelings, I suppose, are similar. I did not write my book with any illusions about what it might accomplish in itself; if it contributes in some measure, however, to the creation of an atmosphere in which concerned Diaspora Jews will be encouraged to take a good hard look at themselves and draw the logical conclusions, there will have been some point in writing it.

HILLEL HALKIN

Motsa Illit, Israel

ROBERT ALTER writes:

Hillel Halkin can rest assured that there is a good deal of point in his having written his book: what I stressed in my article was precisely that it is the kind of book which will encourage Diaspora Jews to take a hard look at themselves, as he says. To "draw the logical conclusions," however, from this hard look may not be so straightforward a procedure as he assumes because some of the premises of his logic are debatable. I won't try to review all of these here, but perhaps the most fundamental difference between us, as Mr. Halkin himself suggests, is that we understand "culture" in rather different ways.

American Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I want to commend Charles S. Liebman on his insightful notes on American Jewish life ["American Jews: Still a Distinctive Group," August]. I cannot help noting that Milton Yinger in 1970 sensed a similar phenomenon when he characterized Judaism in America not as a denomination but rather as an "established sect." He noted that, like the Quakers, Jews formed an

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accepted subgroup in America who served an adversary role against many of the presuppositions of the majority society. Both Mr. Yinger's appraisal of Jewish sectarianism and Mr. Liebman's four examples of Jewish opposition to the general culture suggest that Jews have been institutionalized in American life as a quasi-official prophetic voice. Their position in America is analogous to what Peter L. Berger has called "the social location of the Hebrew Prophet," i.e., that of a creative marginality preserved by the host society to enable flexibility and change. Such a sociology of Judaism may have the theological consequence of reviving the old idea of a "mission" to the Gentiles.

S. Daniel Breslauer
Department of Religion
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

The Catacombs

To the Editor of Commentary:

Profound thanks to Michael Ledeen for his article, "The Unknown Catacombs" [September]. In 1970 a Friar at the San Sebastiano catacombs almost directly across the Via Appia Antica angrily insisted to me that he had never heard of the Jewish catacombs, that they did not exist, and that he would have no interest in them if they did exist. Yet the Jewish catacombs are clearly indicated . . . on my tourist map of Rome published by OTO Edizioni Roma. They are also mentioned . . . in the 1965 Hachette English-language guide to Italy.

Can Mr. Ledeen suggest ways of achieving positive action in this matter?

[Dr.] Harvey T. Adelson
Montvale, New Jersey

To the Editor of Commentary:

May one who has spent several summers visiting archaeological sites in Rome and Italy be allowed to comment on Michael Ledeen's article? I have found the state of most Italian archaeological sites deplorable, but in general those administered by the Church are less deplorable than those run by the Italian state. In this respect I have always thought that until Rome's Jewish community and others took an interest in the Jewish catacombs, they were better off under the benign neglect of the Vatican than under Italian supervision.

Vatican-Jewish relations in Rome have been so bad until re-

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We know exactly when, how much, and what kind of fertilizer has been applied to each of our vineyards during that time.

We know the results of those applications—and how long the treatment lasted—down to small problem areas only a few yards square and even individual vines.

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We take samples at various depths down to four feet from any part of the vineyard which may show abnormal vine growth or visual deficiencies for comparison with samples from normal areas. These soil samples are delivered to our winery for immediate analysis. They will be analyzed and compared for available nitrogen, pH, organic matter, and other important elements in order to determine the source of the problem and the type and quantity of fertilizer which is required.

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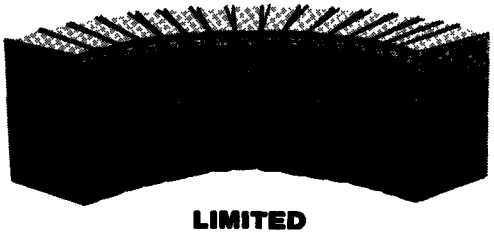

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cently that it is difficult to discuss the Vatican's maintenance of the Jewish catacombs dispassionately. I agree with Mr. Ledeen's belief that it is hard not to exclude residual anti-Semitism as a factor in keeping the Jewish catacombs of Rome in obscurity. However, Mr. Ledeen's further assertion that this is possibly due to the fact that the catacombs contain some bombshells about early Christian history is just plain silly.... Christian theologians have long realized that there existed in early imperial Rome a clear-cut division between Christians and Jews. In addition, art historians have explained the absence of representations of Christ's crucifixion and death not, contrary to Mr. Ledeen's view, as some attempt to deny their occurrence (why were they kept in the Gospels if this was the case?), but to play down this shameful aspect of Christ's ministry (his execution by Roman officials as a common criminal in a disgusting manner) in favor of emphasizing the more attractive aspects of the Christian story....

The article should be followed up by the formation of a committee of interested Americans to work with Roman Jews to effect a transfer of these catacombs into the hands of more interested parties. After achieving that, such a group could begin work on restoring other neglected sites of Jewish interest throughout the Mediterranean. I myself saw neglected Jewish catacombs in Sicily and Malta whose restoration the authorities there would no doubt encourage....

JOHN T. MARRONE
Scarsdale, New York

MICHAEL LEDEEN writes:

Many thanks to Harvey T. Adelson and John T. Marrone for their kind words. Dr. Adelson's experiences at San Sebastiano were quite typical, and I should add that since the writing of my article the catacombs at Villa Torlonia—which had briefly been opened to the public for one-half day a week—have been closed.

Mr. Marrone may well be right in claiming that the Jewish catacombs contain no "bombshells," but it is difficult to verify that, or its opposite, so long as the catacombs remain under Vatican control. He has also misunderstood one of my points: I did not argue that there was an attempt in early Christian art to deny that the crucifixion and death of Jesus had taken place. I argued, in line with the best scholarship in this field (in which I am most surely not an expert), that "Christian" and "Jewish" art in the early years of the Common Era are indistinguishable, and that they most likely form part of a common tradition. This, along with the existence of a far larger and more important Jewish community in ancient Rome than is commonly recognized, could perhaps be established by an analysis of the Jewish catacombs. But since all the artifacts from these catacombs have been stowed away by the Vatican, we simply are groping in the dark, both metaphorically and literally. To take the most elementary problem: will there be any reason to believe that the Vatican has turned over the full inventory if and when a transfer of control takes place?

As for the method of getting at this important Jewish patrimony, at present the Vatican controls the catacombs as a result of Italian law, and the law must be changed in order for transfer of control to occur. I am personally convinced that nothing will happen as long as the officials of the Roman Jewish community continue to pretend that all is well, and that the Vatican administration of the catacombs has been exemplary. Consequently, the first step in this process must be for concerned organizations to assure the Italian Jews that they will have full support if they decide to press for Jewish control. This will inevitably mean guarantees of financial and cultural aid. Without that, one must agree with Mr. Marrone that the Vatican, on balance, probably does better than the Italian state (it has far greater financial and cultural resources), even though one must doubt that the Church has shown "benign neglect" in this field. The destruction of several catacombs and the sack of others are hardly benign; nor does it stop at neglect, any more than disposing of Jewish religious culture in a tiny display case—as the Vatican Museum did in its exhibit of religious cultures of the world—constitutes a mere oversight.

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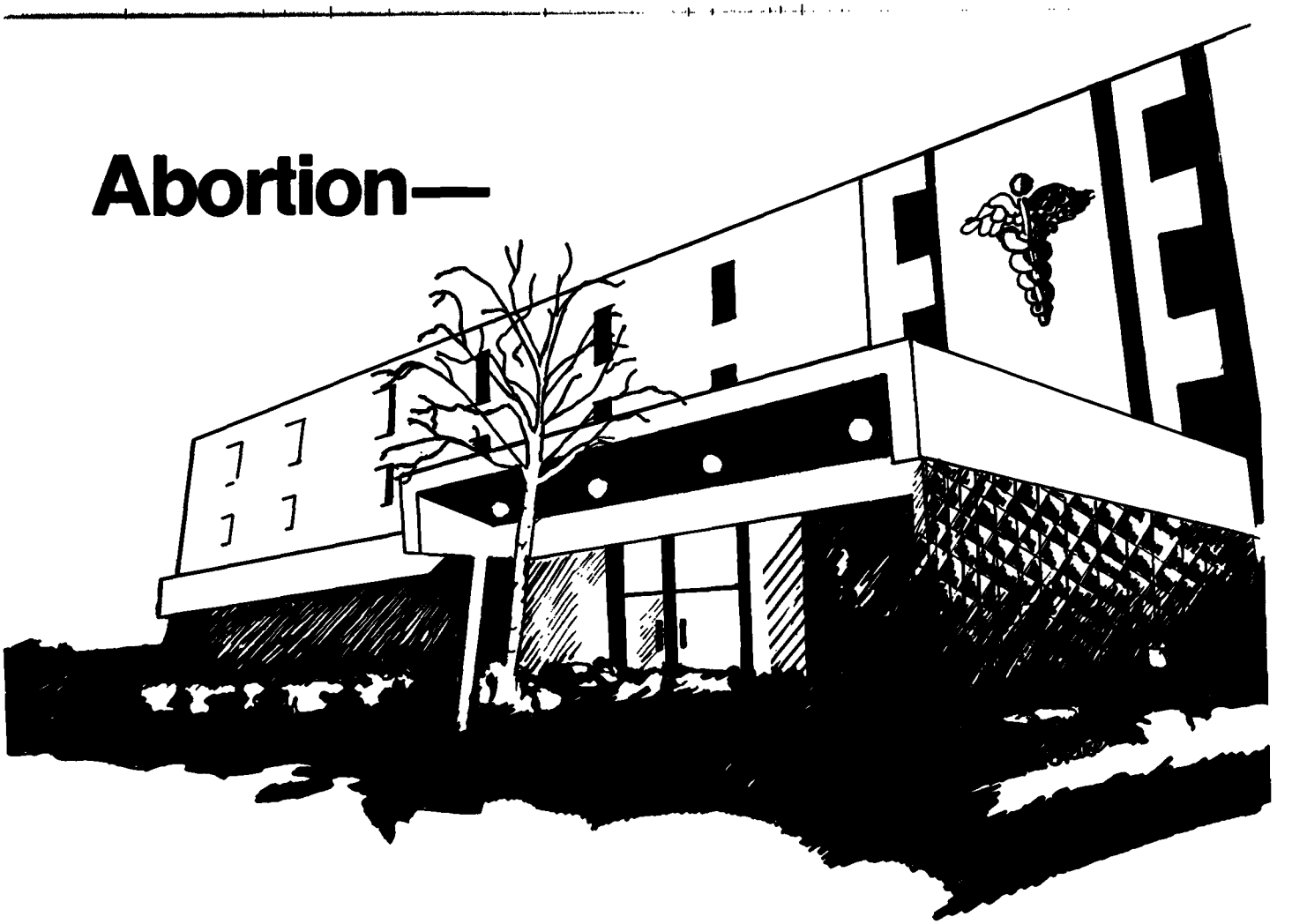

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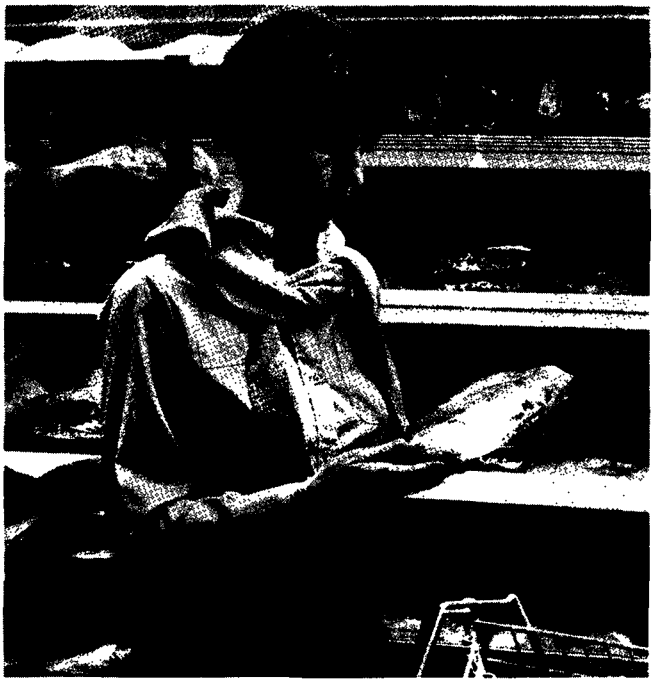

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Carter vs. Israel

What the Polls Reveal

Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider

EVEN before the furor over the new Soviet-American declaration on the Middle East, there was considerable interest in the White House on the state of American public opinion on the Middle East conflict. For as the Carter administration was moving closer and closer to support of a separate Palestinian state which would probably be dominated by the PLO, it was also moving closer and closer to a confrontation with Israel and therefore also with the friends of Israel in the United States. What the administration has wanted to know is how great the political costs of such a confrontation would be. What would happen if Jimmy Carter appealed to public sentiment in an open conflict with Israel? Would public opinion rally behind him and against the Israelis, or would he lose more ground politically than he would gain?

NATIONAL samples of Americans have been questioned by myriad organizations about their attitudes toward Israel and its Arab opponents from the founding of the state in 1948 down to the polls taken for the White House by Pat Caddell this past summer. These surveys show certain clear patterns. First, there has never been a poll which has found more support for the Arabs than for the Israelis, no matter how the question has been asked. Many Americans have on different occasions told interviewers they did not know enough about the situation to make a choice. But among those who felt that they did know enough to form an opinion, sympathy for Israel has always predominated. Various surveys taken between February 1948 and March 1949, at the time of the first Arab-Israeli war, indicated that more than a third sympathized with the Israelis, while between 11 and 16 per cent said they favored the Arabs. Again, during the crisis which led to the Sinai War in 1956, surveys found two to three times as many people blaming the Arabs generally or the Egyptians in particular as blamed Israel.

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET, a leading authority on American public opinion, is professor of political science and sociology and senior fellow of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. WILLIAM SCHNEIDER is an associate professor of government at Harvard University.

In the next ten years, there was comparatively little interest in the Middle East, but the outbreak of the Six-Day War in June 1967 led to a groundswell of sympathy for Israel among the American public. According to a Gallup poll taken during the war, 48 per cent said their sympathy lay more with Israel than with the Arab states, as compared with only 4 per cent who replied that their sympathies lay with the Arabs. The findings of the Harris poll during the same period were 41 per cent sympathetic to Israel and only 1 per cent to the Arabs. In the months following the Six-Day War, the American public evidently became even more pro-Israel, if their answers to questions dealing with the future of Jerusalem were any indication. The Harris survey found that the percentage saying, "Let Israel keep control of Jerusalem" increased from 10 in July to 43 in September, while those who favored making Jerusalem an "international city" dropped from 70 to 33 per cent.

Since 1967 questions concerning sympathy in the Middle East conflict have been asked on a fairly regular basis by several national polling organizations: Gallup (1967-77), Harris (1967-75), Roper (1974-77), and Yankelovich, Skelly, and White (1974-77). In the twenty-seven national polls which we have located, taken between 1967 and 1977, sympathy for Israel has ranged between 35 and 56 per cent, and sympathy for the Arabs between 1 and 9 per cent, with the remainder saying "neither side," "both sides," or "don't know."

Thus, support for the Arabs among the American people in the past ten years has been consistently low, averaging only 6 per cent. There has been considerably greater variation in pro-Israel sentiment. But whenever support for Israel has fallen, it has done so not because sympathy for the Arabs has increased, but because of a rise in indifference. Moreover, sympathy for Israel over the Arab states has been much greater since 1967 than before—despite the oil crisis which developed in tandem with the Yom Kippur War and despite the apparent increase in isolationist sentiment following on the American fiasco in Vietnam. Many friends of Israel feared that distance from the Holocaust and from the events that led to Israel's founding, as well as the increase in oppo-

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sition to Israel in other countries and the concern over oil supplies here, would lead to a decline in American sympathy for Israel. But this has simply not happened. On the contrary, support has greatly increased in recent years. The reason seems to be admiration for the way a small democratic nation, allied to the United States, has been able to stand off and defeat the massive onslaughts of Arab armies.

THE quality or depth of feeling about Israel has also been tested by pollsters in a more extreme fashion by asking how people would react to Israel's destruction. Thus Harris inquired in the winter of 1974-75: "If there were another war in the Middle East and Israel were overrun by the Arabs, would you be very upset, mildly upset, mildly pleased, or very pleased?" His findings were 44 per cent very upset and 34 per cent mildly upset, as against 2 per cent mildly pleased, and only 1 per cent very pleased. More recently, Yankelovich touched on similar sentiments when he asked in March 1977: "If Israel were destroyed by the Arabs and ceased to exist as an independent state, would this leave you indifferent, sorry but not personally affected, or feeling a deep sense of personal loss?" Only 13 per cent replied "indifferent," 27 per cent said they would feel a "deep sense of personal loss," while the remaining 60 per cent indicated "sorry but not personally affected." Many of the latter group, however, were clearly pro-Israel, since 66 per cent of all those queried in the same survey agreed that "the continuation of Israel as a Jewish state is important to our country and people like yourself," while only 27 per cent replied "not important."

If large numbers of Americans feel warmly toward Israel, there is some evidence to suggest that a significant minority has negative, close to racist, attitudes toward the Arabs. This conclusion is suggested in the results of a poll taken by Pat Caddell's Cambridge Survey Research organization in the summer of 1975. Caddell gave respondents a list of images and asked them: "Does each word apply more to the Arabs or more to the Israelis?" Nearly half or more said that the terms "greedy," "arrogant," and "barbaric" apply to the Arabs; relatively few described the Arabs as "peaceful," as "honest," as "friendly," or as "like Americans," while a majority used these terms to describe the Israelis.

Israel does even better in competition with the Palestine Liberation Organization. In surveys conducted by Yankelovich in 1975, 1976, and 1977, respondents were asked to react to a number of statements about the PLO and Israel, and their answers revealed overwhelming preference for Israel in every case. In the most recent survey (March 1977), 88 per cent said that "we can get along" with Israel, while only 23 per cent said the same for the PLO. Four-fifths replied that the PLO was "anti-U.S.," while only a tenth had comparable opinions about Israel. Over 70 per cent believed that Israel was "democratic," while only 7 per cent thought the same about the PLO.

Israel has steadily bettered its comparative standing in these three studies, while the PLO has steadily fallen. But what is even more significant, American opinion has grown more and more sympathetic to Israel's refusal to negotiate with the PLO. When asked by Yankelovich in January 1975 whether "Israel is doing the right thing in refusing to negotiate with the PLO," only 27 per cent said Israel was right, 36 per cent felt it was wrong, and 35 per cent were not sure. A year later, the responses were slightly more positive from Israel's point of view, with 31 per cent saying Israel was right, 31 wrong, and 38 not sure. But in March 1977 Yankelovich found a plurality in Israel's favor, with 40 per cent saying Israel is right in not negotiating with the PLO as compared with 21 per cent who think this policy is wrong.

There is some indication in recent surveys that Americans differentiate between the Palestinians as a group and the PLO or the Arabs. They are more likely to express sympathy for the Palestinians than for the Arabs or the PLO. For example, while sympathy for the Arabs runs between 5 and 9 per cent, Harris found 14 per cent voicing sympathy for the Palestinians in his winter 1974-75 Middle East survey. Respondents were evenly split over the statement, offered by Harris, that "Israel has mistreated the Palestinian refugees and that is wrong" (29 per cent agreed, 28 per cent disagreed, while even more—41 per cent—responded "don't know"). In the Yankelovich survey taken in March 1977—before Begin's election—the 61 per cent of respondents who said they had heard of the PLO were asked: "Do you think the Palestinian refugees have any legitimate complaints against Israel?" Over half of these—55 per cent—said yes, while only 18 per cent felt that the Palestinians had no legitimate complaints. Only 16 per cent of the same informed respondents, however, agreed that "the Arabs have a strong moral case against Israel which deserves more attention than we give it," a finding in line with the other evidence that Americans distinguish between "Arabs" and "Palestinians."

The point at which sympathy for the Palestinians ends is the PLO. In Harris's winter 1974-75 Middle East survey, a plurality of Americans labeled Yasir Arafat as an "extremist" and a "terrorist" and a man "responsible for the outrageous slaughter of innocent children." Americans tended to reject the notion that Arafat "has become more moderate in his demands lately" (29 to 19 per cent), that he "wants to work out a peaceful settlement in the Middle East" (30 to 19 per cent), that he made a good impression at

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the United Nations (32 to 17 per cent), or that he should be a permanent observer at the United Nations (35 to 18 per cent).

The record seems clear. By whatever measure or question one uses, and whatever opinion poll one consults, American sympathy for Israel has remained relatively constant since 1967, and many more Americans have been supportive of Israel than of the Arabs.

Sympathy for Israel does not, however, translate directly into support for U.S. military aid to Israel. A review of ten polls taken by the Gallup, Harris, and Yankelovich organizations between 1967 and 1977 shows opponents of military aid outnumbering supporters in six polls, and supporters outnumbering opponents in four. In most cases, the two sides were almost evenly balanced.

Yet however limited the support we find for U.S. military aid to Israel, support for U.S. military aid to the Arab nations is consistently lower. In October 1973, just after the Yom Kippur War, Gallup asked those who had heard or read about the conflict whether the U.S. should supply arms and materiel to Israel and, in a separate question, to the Arabs. While military aid to Israel was opposed by a margin of 49 to 37 per cent, military aid to the Arabs was opposed by the much more decisive margin of 85 to 2.

The issue here, then, would seem to be not Israel versus the Arabs, but military aid itself. Foreign aid is not a particularly popular program, and military aid is even less so. In the 1974-75 Harris survey Americans were overwhelmingly favorable (93 per cent) to "our giving emergency food and medical supplies to other nations in cases of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes" and by a margin of 53 to 38 they also favored "our giving economic aid to other nations for purposes of economic development and technical assistance." But when the survey turned to the issue of military rather than economic aid, public support collapsed. Asked "On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving *military* aid to other nations?" (emphasis in questionnaire), only 22 per cent said they favored it, with fully 75 per cent opposed. Americans were even hostile (53-35) to the idea of selling arms abroad. In fact, when respondents were given a list of thirteen federal programs and asked whether each should be expanded, cut back, or kept the same, economic and military aid to other nations emerged as the two least popular policies: 70 per cent felt that military aid to other nations should be cut back and 56 per cent felt that foreign economic aid should be cut back.

Another piece of evidence that Americans are against military aid in general rather than aid to Israel is the finding that those who oppose military aid to Israel tend to oppose military aid to other countries as well, including the Arab countries. Thus, in October 1974 the Yankelovich poll asked respondents whether they thought the United States should send arms to each country in a list of ten. Those who opposed military aid to Israel were also likely to oppose it for South Korea, Greece, Italy, South Vietnam, Turkey, Ireland, and Yugoslavia, as well as for Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

In its winter 1974-75 survey, the Harris organization interviewed a sample of over 3,000 Americans for an average of 73 minutes each on the subject of Israel, the Middle East conflict, and anti-Semitism. The Harris survey included four questions relating to U.S. military aid to Israel. Two of these questions were worded in a "positive" way, that is, offering cues favorable to U.S. military aid: "In general, with the Russians arming Egypt and Syria, do you think the U.S. is right or wrong to send Israel the military supplies it needs?"; and "If war broke out again in the Middle East between the Arabs and Israel, would you favor or oppose the U.S. continuing to send military supplies, not troops or personnel, to help Israel?" On both questions, 65 per cent of the sample favored military aid, with only 21-24 per cent opposed, an unusually high level of support for Israel. One might suppose that such strong support was due to the bias in question-wording ("with the *Russians* arming Egypt and Syria," "the military supplies [Israel] *needs*," etc.). But the survey included two other questions which were worded with a negative bias toward Israel: "We need Arab oil for our gasoline shortage here at home, so we had better find ways to get along with the Arabs, even if that means supporting Israel less"; and "If it came right down to it and the only way we could get Arab oil in enough quantity and at lower prices were to stop supporting Israel with military aid, would you favor or oppose such a move by this country?" Sixty-eight per cent opposed cutting off military aid to Israel in order to get more Arab oil at lower prices. Thus, on all four questions, the winter 1974-75 Harris survey showed a consistent 63-68 per cent of Americans in favor of U.S. military aid to Israel.

These figures are considerably more favorable to Israel than those obtained in other surveys taken at about the same time. Inspection of the Harris questionnaire reveals the likely explanation. Virtually the entire interview dealt with Israel and the Middle East, thus establishing a definite context in the minds of the respondents. Moreover, the first question concerning support for U.S. military aid was asked after a sequence of questions dealing with sympathy in the Middle East conflict (53 per cent for Israel); estimated chances for a Middle East peace settlement (only 16 per cent "excellent" or "pretty good"); blame for starting the October 1973 war (Arabs 42 per cent,

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Israel 10 per cent); assessment of which side won the 1967 war (Arabs 5 per cent, Israel 43 per cent) and the 1973 war (Arabs 10 per cent, Israel 27 per cent); and a guess as to who would win "another war in the Middle East" (Arabs 20 per cent, Israel 35 per cent). This sequence of questions clearly established *Israel*, rather than military aid, as the focus of attention. Moreover, the questions leading up to the one on military aid suggested a pattern of increasing Arab military success, from the 1967 war to the 1973 war to a possible future war.

On the other hand, whenever military aid to other countries is the focus—as in the Yankelovich poll of October 1974—support for aid to Israel falls considerably. Yet even in the Yankelovich interview, more Americans supported military aid to Israel than to any of the other nine countries listed.

A similar pattern is apparent in a November 1976 Roper survey which asked respondents whether they thought the U.S. should sell arms to each country in a list of eleven. Americans were favorable to selling arms only to two countries, England and France. Next came Israel and West Germany, where support and opposition were about even (37 per cent in favor, 42-43 per cent opposed). By contrast, rather strong pluralities opposed the sale of arms to Japan, Spain, South Korea, Turkey, and Greece, while the greatest opposition was expressed in the cases of Iran (55 per cent opposed) and Saudi Arabia (61 per cent opposed).

Thus, the data indicate positive public sentiment toward Israel, negative public sentiment toward military aid, and, when the two are combined, stronger public support for military aid to Israel than for military aid to other countries, with the exception of our major West European allies.

IF THERE is one idea more negatively regarded than military aid, it is the involvement of American troops. "Suppose it looked as though the Arabs, with the help of the Russians, were going to take over Israel in the Middle East. Would you favor or oppose sending U.S. troops to keep Israel from being taken over?" Opposed, 52 per cent; in favor, 25 per cent (Harris, 1971). "If it looked as though Israel were going to be taken over by the Russians and Arabs, do you feel that the United States should do everything to save Israel, including going to war, or do you think the United States should avoid getting involved with our own troops, even if Israel were going under?" Avoid involvement, 51 per cent; favor involvement, 34 per cent (Harris, 1973). The two winter 1974-75 Harris polls, which differed widely in public support for military aid to Israel, showed quite similar results in questions involving the use of American troops. In the survey primarily concerned with Middle East issues, 55 per cent felt that the U.S. should not send troops even "if it looked as though Israel were going to be overrun by the Arabs in another war" (23 per cent supported the use of U.S. troops). In a general foreign-policy survey carried out by Harris on behalf of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 50 per cent opposed U.S. military involvement, "including the use of U.S. troops," "if Israel were being defeated by the Arabs" (27 per cent favored U.S. involvement).

But opposition to U.S. troop involvement is not limited to Israel or the Middle East. The Harris poll for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations listed twelve circumstances which "might justify U.S. military involvement, including the use of U.S. troops." Only one circumstance called forth more support for than opposition to the use of American troops—"if Canada were invaded." Opinion was about evenly divided over the use of U.S. troops "if Western Europe were invaded." Opposition to U.S. military involvement outweighed support by about 10 per cent "if the Russians took over West Berlin" and "if Castro's Cuba invaded the Dominican Republic." Opposition outweighed support by 23 per cent "if Israel were being defeated by the Arabs," and by 35 per cent "if the Arabs cut off the oil supply to Western Europe." In the other six circumstances, support for U.S. troops ranged between 10 and 20 per cent and opposition varied between 58 and 73 per cent: "if Communist China invaded Taiwan," "if Communist China attacked India," "if the Arabs cut off the oil supply to Japan," "if North Korea attacked South Korea," "if the Soviet Union attacked Yugoslavia after Tito's death," "if North Vietnam launched a major attack against Saigon."

Clearly, Americans are willing to fight for the security only of neighboring Western Hemisphere countries and of our principal allies in Western Europe. Gallup found in polls taken in 1971 and 1975 that a plurality of Americans favored sending U.S. troops if either Mexico or England were attacked "by Communist-backed forces." This sentiment did not apply, however, to West Germany, Israel, Japan, India, Thailand, Brazil, Taiwan, or Turkey.

IN THE first eight months of his Presidency, Jimmy Carter has pressured Israel on a number of issues—the occupied territories, the legitimacy of the Palestinians' claim to a homeland, negotiations with the PLO. To what extent do President Carter's positions find support in the public as a whole?

Just this past August, Pat Caddell's Cambridge Survey Research asked a national sample of Americans to react to the Carter peace package in the following terms: "The President has outlined several key elements of a Middle East Peace Agreement: an expressed willingness by the Arabs to recognize Israel's sovereignty and to normalize re-

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lations with Israel; phased Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, combined with effective security measures; a homeland for the Palestinians. Do you think this represents a fair basis of settlement?"

This question referred in general terms to all the elements that have been demanded by each side of the other. Not surprisingly, a plurality of Americans agree that obtaining all this would be desirable. Almost half, 48 per cent, said "Yes," 13 per cent replied "No," while 39 per cent were "Not sure."

It is, of course, impossible to tell what the respondents felt about any given element of the proposed agreement, whether they most favored recognition of Israel, phased Israeli withdrawal in return for "effective security measures," or a Palestinian homeland. We do, however, know from other surveys what Americans think about some of the individual parts of the President's package. On the question of the occupied territories, for example, there is very little public feeling that Israel is holding them unfairly and should simply give them up. The most straightforward question was asked in the Harris Middle East survey of December 1974-January 1975: "Israel should give back the territory it gained from the war of 1967." Americans disagreed with this proposition by a ratio of two to one. Support for Israel's hold on the occupied territories became even stronger when these same respondents were offered a slightly different proposition: "Israel should just give up the occupied Palestinian Arab territory and let Arafat rule it." In this case 54 per cent disagreed and 11 per cent agreed—a ratio of five to one.

Most relevant to the current situation, perhaps, was the public's response to the proposal that "The U.S. should *not* pressure Israel to give back all the Arab lands that were obtained in the 1967 Middle East war and in the latest war." Americans agreed with this position, 54 to 19 per cent, although it is possible that the specification of "all" the Arab territories may have seemed extreme to many Americans (Jerusalem, for example, would have been included). In March 1977, Yankelovich presented respondents with a proposition that was more moderate in scope: "The United States should reduce its support of Israel unless the Israelis are willing to compromise and give back some of the land they took from the Arabs during the recent wars." Still, 45 per cent of Americans were opposed to a reduction of American support and only 26 per cent favored it.

THE essence of American opinion on the occupied territories is revealed by a question which the Roper poll has asked every year since 1973: "Ever since the Six-Day War, Israel has occupied territory that formerly belonged to the Arab nations. Which one of these statements comes closest to expressing how you feel about this?" The results show a remarkable stability of opinion over the last four years. Only a small percentage of respondents (6-7) have felt that "The territory Israel has taken in the last two wars didn't belong to her and she should not be allowed to keep it under any circumstances." The most hard-line position, "Israel should keep all of the territory she has won in the last two Arab-Israeli wars," is not very popular either; it is endorsed by only 13-16 per cent of the public. In all four polls, a majority of Americans took one of the two "intermediate" positions. About a quarter of the respondents endorsed the "soft" intermediate position, that "Israel should give up all or most of the territory she has taken in the last two wars—but only if a satisfactory treaty can be negotiated with the Arabs that will guarantee her existence as a state." The "hard" intermediate position—"It is time for Israel to make *some* concessions, but it is important that she keep what territory is essential for her defense"—is somewhat more popular, with about 30 per cent of Americans favoring that option. This last position was the one most frequently chosen in all four polls.

The only trend one can detect in the answers to the Roper question over the past four years is a slight increase in the percentage of Americans taking the two harder-line positions. Since the latest Roper figures were obtained from a survey administered *after* the Begin election, the data gave no indication of impatience with the new Israeli government on the part of the American public.

On the issue of a "Palestinian homeland," both Yankelovich and Roper have found considerable support for a position similar to the President's. Thus, in the March 1977 Yankelovich survey, 52 per cent agreed that "the Palestinians have a right to a homeland as much as the Jews do." But when the PLO is brought into the picture, support for the idea of a Palestinian homeland falls precipitously. In July, Roper asked: "As you may know, the Palestine Liberation Organization in the Middle East, known as the 'PLO,' wants to establish a homeland for Palestinian refugees in territory once held by the Palestinians but now held by Israel. Do you think the PLO is right or wrong in wanting to establish a Palestinian homeland in Israel, or haven't you paid much attention to it?" To this question 21 per cent said that the PLO is right in wanting to establish a Palestinian homeland and 20 per cent said that it is wrong. An additional 9 per cent volunteered the response that the goal of a Palestinian homeland is right, but the methods of the PLO are wrong. (On this, as on most other questions dealing with the Palestinian issue, a large proportion of respondents, here 50 per cent, said that they "didn't know" how they felt or "hadn't paid attention" to the issue.)

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In addition to pressuring Israel, the administration has been making no secret of its belief that Israeli "intransigence" is the major obstacle to peace. Does the public agree? All extant survey data suggest that it does not. Thus the March 1977 Yankelovich poll indicated that a majority viewed both sides as obstreperous, but over 70 per cent felt that the Arabs' refusal to recognize Israel and to sit down at a negotiating table with it was a major obstacle to peace, as contrasted with 55 per cent who believed that "Israel's refusal to negotiate with the Palestinians" was an obstacle. In earlier Yankelovich surveys, a majority of Americans said that "the Arab nations are not interested in making peace but rather in destroying Israel" (53 per cent in 1975, 56 per cent in 1976, with only 17-19 per cent expressing the opposite view). A poll taken by Cambridge Survey Research in the summer of 1975 showed three times as many Americans blaming the Arabs for the Middle East crisis (32 per cent) as blamed Israel (10 per cent). When asked to rate six Middle Eastern countries in terms of their "sincerity" in looking for a peaceful solution to their problems, Israel was ranked as very sincere by 26 per cent, followed by Egypt with 12 per cent, Jordan with 11 per cent, and Saudi Arabia with 10. And finally, Yankelovich surveys asked a key question relating to purported Israeli intransigence: "In the current situation, do you feel that the Israelis are doing everything possible to achieve a peace settlement or do you feel that their attitudes and demands are unreasonable?" In August 1975, Yankelovich showed 37 per cent of Americans claiming that Israel's demands were unreasonable, with only 23 per cent saying that Israel was doing everything possible to achieve peace. By March 1977, however, that attitude had reversed. Thirty-nine per cent now said that Israel was "doing everything possible to achieve a peace settlement," and only 29 per cent felt that Israel was being unreasonable.

On this issue, as on others, the evidence points to a trend in Israel's favor. Unfortunately, there have been no major polls dealing with this question since the new Israeli government took office. We have no basis, therefore, for assuming that the trend has continued. All the data suggest is that at the time of the May 1977 vote, American public opinion continued to see the Arabs as more intransigent, more reluctant to come to the peace table or to agree to the necessary conditions, than Israel.

IN ASSESSING the implications of these data, one has to take into consideration not only how many can be counted for and against, but also who they are. Which groups in the population are strongest in their support for, and opposition to, Israel? Our review of the distribution of public opinion reveals a persistent relationship: in virtually all surveys, support for Israel has tended to increase with higher levels of education, income, and occupational status.

The winter 1974-75 Harris survey found 65 per cent of those who had attended college sympathetic to Israel, compared with 51 per cent among the high-school-educated and 47 per cent among those whose education had not gone beyond grammar school. Over half the college-educated, 54 per cent, agreed that the United States has a special stake in seeing that Israel is not overtaken militarily, while only 38 per cent of those who had not gone beyond high school and 30 per cent of the grade-school-educated felt the same way. In Gallup's 1976 survey of national ratings, 77 per cent of those who had been exposed to higher education gave Israel a favorable rating, while 62 per cent of those with a high-school education were of the same opinion, but only 50 per cent of the grade-school-educated felt the same way. In January 1977, Roper reported that 54 per cent of those in executive and professional occupations were sympathetic to Israel compared with 50 per cent of white-collar and 46 per cent of blue-collar workers. By income, the range of sympathy for Israel ran from 55 per cent pro-Israel among those earning $18,000 a year or more to 41 per cent among those with family incomes of $6,000 or less. The March 1977 Yankelovich poll found that 75 per cent of college graduates regarded Israel as a friend and ally of the United States, compared with 46 per cent among high-school graduates and only 34 per cent of those with less than a high-school diploma. Sympathy for the Arabs on these and other questions varied little by socioeconomic status and education: all groups were equally unenthusiastic, with the less advantaged more likely to give "don't know" responses.

These findings, consistently showing greater support for Israel among the better educated, the more affluent, and those in executive and professional positions, suggest that Israel has strong backing among the elite sectors—those who are more active politically and presumably more influential. The results of a number of studies of such groups confirm this assumption.

Thus, in winter 1974-75, Harris compared the opinions of a national sample of 3,377 persons with those of 491 "leaders," selected from among people who "have impact within their community." The leaders' sympathies were more with Israel than the Arabs by a ratio of over eleven to one, 56 to 5 per cent, as contrasted with the general public's seven-and-a-half to one, 52 to 7. Three-quarters of the leaders favored sending military supplies to Israel if war breaks out, a position taken by 66 per cent of the general public. When asked how they would feel if "Israel were overrun by the Arabs," 44 per cent of the general sample said "very upset" in contrast to 65 per cent of the leaders. The leaders and the public both overwhelmingly disagreed with the statement that "We

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need Arab oil for our gasoline shortage here at home, so we had better find ways to get along with the Arabs, even if that means supporting Israel less." The leaders, however, felt this way by a ratio of 78-15 per cent, while the public took the same view by a somewhat lower one, 68-20. In a January 1977 survey, Roper found that fully 60 per cent of the 12 per cent of his respondents who were classified as "high" on a scale of political and social activism were sympathetic to Israel, as compared with 40 per cent of the sample as a whole. Both groups showed little sympathy for the Arabs, 6-7 per cent.

THERE is little doubt, then, that most Americans support Israel, and that support is strongest among the well-educated, activist, and influential social strata. But even knowing something about the distribution of public opinion does not give us everything we need to assess the political effectiveness of an issue. We have to make some estimate of the *salience* of opinion among those on both sides of an issue: is the attitude measured by the polls a "mere opinion" with little intensity of conviction, or is it a passionate conviction which dominates the respondent's political activity?

It is hardly news that for Jews, Israel is just such a salient issue. In the past, there have been several sources of anti-Zionist sentiment within the Jewish community: socialist anti-Zionism, which rejected Zionism as a species of bourgeois nationalism; religious anti-Zionism, which saw no theological justification for reestablishing the state of Israel at this time; and assimilationist anti-Zionism, which feared that the charge of "dual loyalty" would retard the full acceptance of Jews by the larger secular society. Nevertheless, in the winter 1974-75 Harris poll, fully 95 per cent of the national Jewish sample proclaimed a sympathy for Israel in the Middle East conflict (0.2 per cent—precisely one Jewish respondent out of 506—favored the Arabs). Ninety-four per cent agreed that "The Arabs are determined to destroy Israel, so Israel is justified in building itself up militarily to defend itself." The same percentage—94—said that they would be "very upset" if there were another war in the Middle East "and Israel were overrun by the Arabs." Fully 96 per cent favored the U.S. sending military supplies to Israel, and a similar percentage opposed the U.S. lowering its aid to Israel in order to obtain more Arab oil at lower prices. "Israel," as Nathan Glazer has said, "has become the religion of American Jews."

It is difficult to gauge passion in the relatively dispassionate atmosphere of a survey interview, but several questions indicate the intensity of this Jewish commitment to Israel. Fully 81 per cent of the Jewish sample felt that "Jews who live in the United States have a special obligation to support Israel with funds and other aid" (17 per cent disagreed). And an astonishing 83 per cent said that they had given "financial contributions to [an] organization which is supporting Israel" during the previous twelve months; only 15 per cent of the Jews said that they had failed to contribute. And while only 37 per cent of the Jews had relatives living in Israel and 45 per cent had friends there, 71 per cent said that they felt a "special desire" to visit Israel because they were Jewish.

ARE there any anti-Israel constituencies as intense in their antagonism as the Jewish community is in its support? If one looks through survey data for the single "simply defined group" which is least supportive of Israel, the answer one finds, in most cases, is the blacks. In twelve of the thirteen different surveys taken between 1970 and 1977 asking respondents whether they sympathized with Israel or the Arabs, blacks were less sympathetic to Israel than whites—by an average of 13 per cent. Black support for Israel was, moreover, lower than that of whites at every level of education and at every age level.

Generally, across the whole range of questions asked about Israel in the 1974-75 Harris survey, white Protestants were the most supportive (58 per cent) and blacks the least supportive (31 per cent), with white Catholics (47 per cent), and Hispanic-Americans (49 per cent) in between. While most surveys use samples that are too small to allow for any analysis of Hispanic-Americans as a group, the Catholic-Protestant difference was fairly consistent across thirteen different surveys. On the average, Catholics were 7 per cent less sympathetic to Israel than Protestants. Finally, it is important to point out that for blacks and Hispanics, relatively low support for Israel was accompanied by relatively high levels of "domestic" anti-Semitism, even after educational differences had been taken into account.

These ethnic effects are interesting, but they do not amount to evidence that blacks, Hispanic-Americans, or Catholics constitute a "veto group" passionately committed to a program of anti-Zionism and organized to help or hurt a politician depending on how he stands on this issue. The relative differences among the major racial and religious groups are noticeable and consistent, but one must also look at their absolute levels of support for Israel or the Arabs. Very few claim actually to sympathize with the Arabs: pro-Arab sympathy in the 1974-75 Harris poll was expressed by 5 per cent of white Protestants, 9 per cent of white Catholics, 11 per cent of Hispanic-Americans, and 12 per cent of blacks—hardly a passionate commitment. The same thirteen surveys that showed blacks, on the average, 13 per cent less favorable to Israel than whites did not show a comparable difference on the pro-Arab side; blacks were on the average only 3 per cent more pro-Arab than whites. The rest of the difference consisted

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of more black respondents saying "don't know," or favoring "both sides" or "neither side" in the conflict. When offered the statement, "Israel is a small, courageous, democratic nation, which is trying to preserve its independence," agreement was expressed by 89 per cent of whites but also by 72 per cent of Hispanic-Americans and 68 per cent—two-thirds—of blacks.

In comparison with whites (46 per cent for Protestants and 41 per cent for Catholics), fewer blacks (35 per cent) and Hispanic-Americans (37 per cent) said they would be "very upset" if Israel were overrun by the Arabs. But very few said they would be "pleased" by such an eventuality—only 4 per cent in each group, compared with about 2 per cent of whites. Again, the major difference was the higher proportion of blacks and Hispanics who said "don't know." Opposition to U.S. military aid to Israel was expressed by 22 per cent of white Protestants, 28 per cent of white Catholics, 22 per cent of Hispanic-Americans, and 31 per cent of blacks. But more blacks (47 per cent) favored military aid than opposed it. Similarly, a reduction in U.S. military aid to Israel in return for lower oil prices was favored by 16 per cent of white Protestants, 22 per cent of white Catholics, 25 per cent of blacks, and 26 per cent of Hispanics. But blacks opposing such a measure outnumbered those who favored it by 41 to 25 per cent, with Hispanic-Americans rejecting the same measure by 52 to 26.

In short, while the evidence does indicate a higher level of anti-Israel feeling among blacks, Hispanic-Americans, and (to a lesser extent) white Catholics, it does not indicate anything close to a passionate anti-Israel conviction among any of these groups.

ANOTHER source of anti-Israel sentiment is often said to consist of ideological liberals and radicals. But survey research does not confirm this much-publicized impression. Thus, a Yankelovich survey carried out in October 1974 showed self-described liberals as slightly more sympathetic to Israel than self-described conservatives (by a difference of 6 per cent), even though these liberals were considerably (15 per cent) less supportive of U.S. military aid to Israel—or to any other country tested. In the winter 1974-75 Harris poll, liberals were only slightly less likely than conservatives to support U.S. military involvement, including the possible use of troops, "if Israel were being defeated by the Arabs." Some 1975 results reported by Cambridge Survey Research show self-described conservatives more pro-Israel than liberals, but only marginally.

The March Yankelovich survey revealed some interesting and suggestive age differences. The young—those under thirty-five—were less likely to claim a strong identification with Israel, less likely to agree that "the Israelis are doing everything possible to achieve a peace settlement," and more likely to say that Israel's demands are unreasonable. Using the raw data from the winter 1974-75 Harris survey, we decided to determine whether these positions were really connected with age. The Harris survey did not include a question asking respondents to classify themselves as liberals, moderates, or conservatives, but respondents were asked how they had voted in the 1972 presidential election two years before, for Nixon or for McGovern. We looked at whites only, in order to remove the major confounding effect of large numbers of blacks and Hispanic-Americans voting for McGovern and at the same time expressing anti-Israel attitudes for—possibly—different reasons.

What we found was illuminating. McGovern voters were somewhat less supportive of Israel and a good deal less supportive of U.S. military aid to Israel than were Nixon voters—but this was true only among younger voters, that is, voters under the age of forty. Among those forty years of age or older, there was no consistent ideological difference between Nixon voters and McGovern voters; if anything, the older Nixon voters were slightly less supportive of military aid to Israel than were the older McGovern voters. On five questions eliciting sympathy toward Israel, younger McGovern voters averaged 5 per cent less sympathetic than younger Nixon voters, but there was no difference between Nixon and McGovern voters over the age of forty. On questions dealing with U.S. military aid to Israel, McGovern voters under forty averaged 21 per cent less favorable to such aid than Nixon voters under forty. Again, there was no consistent difference between Nixon and McGovern voters over the age of forty.

All this suggests that disaffection with Israel is more characteristic of younger liberals (New Politics, New Left) than of older liberals (New Deal, Fair Deal). Older liberals grew up convinced that support of Israel was a legitimately liberal policy, given the experience of the Holocaust and the predominance of the socialist movement in Israeli politics. Younger liberals tend to doubt the legitimacy of Israel's liberal credentials —and they certainly tend to challenge the motivations behind American military aid to other nations.

Suggestive though these differences are, they do not point to the existence of a significant body of opinion hostile to Israel, and they give no evidence of a "passionate conviction" in any sense comparable to that of the Jewish community on the other side. One would have to go to a very fine level of detail—probably among younger blacks and radicals—to find deep-seated anti-Zionist convictions. To pursue the analysis at this level would require the tools not of survey research but of investigative reporting.

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There can be little doubt, then, that the only "veto group" in the American electorate concerned with the Middle East is composed of those dedicated to the survival of Israel. This group, which includes almost all Jews along with many non-Jews, has been ready to bombard Congressmen and the administration with letters, telegrams, phone calls, and personal visits to present their case. Many of them have been willing to contribute generously to the campaign funds of politicians who support Israel. Conversely, they will vote against those who oppose Israel, a fact of which officeholders are well aware.

It may, of course, be argued that Jews constitute only 3 per cent of the population and that they can therefore be ignored by politicians who are not in areas of high Jewish concentration. In fact, however, Jews have a much higher rate of electoral participation than other groups. Close to 90 per cent of them vote in national elections, compared with 53 per cent of the electorate as a whole. Last summer, in a discussion, Pat Caddell estimated that outside of the South, Jews constitute not 3 but 7 per cent of the voters. If one adds to this figure the additional 20 per cent or so of non-Jews whom the opinion polls show to be as passionately pro-Israel as the Jews, it is clear that Israel enjoys the backing of one of the largest veto groups in the country. Hence, actions which antagonize or attract this body of opinion can affect the electoral fortunes of many candidates, including those running for President.

How important is public opinion, as revealed by the various national-opinion surveys, in the making of foreign policy? So far as the Middle East goes, in a recent piece in the New York *Times*, Terence Smith concluded: "In the final analysis, Pat Caddell, the President's pollster, and his other domestic political advisers may have a decisive voice in determining whether Mr. Carter takes on the Israelis. They will assess the political cost of such a campaign and advise Mr. Carter whether public concern at the possibility of another Arab oil embargo is enough to justify a confrontation with Israel."

If Mr. Smith is right that Jimmy Carter's policies on the Middle East will be deeply affected by judgments about public opinion, we would hope that the President examines the entire body of evidence, not simply the few questions asked by Caddell. For Caddell's most recent query is presented in the context of conditions for peace, an outcome fervently desired by most Americans, and it is worded in a manner bound to elicit support for the President's position. But examining all the evidence in hand, "public concern at the possibility of another Arab oil embargo" is not great enough "to justify a confrontation with Israel." The polls on the oil crisis suggest that the American public is still sanguine (overly so in our judgment) about the energy situation. Most of them do not feel that a genuine crisis exists. They believe that the oil companies and the government are exaggerating the problem.

Israel, it is fair to say, is still seen as a brave, small state, composed of people "like us," surrounded by wealthy, powerful, hostile neighbors, some of whom cooperate with the Communist world. And the past use by the Arabs of the oil weapon and their forcing up of the price of oil have reinforced the negative image held of them by most Americans. Overt pressure by the United States against Israel could very well be perceived by many as a form of bullying one of America's closest friends in order to appease states which have hurt us and helped our enemies.

Beyond whatever opinion the majority holds on specific issues like oil, Israel is fervently backed by a politically potent minority, including a very large number of non-Jews, who are prepared to punish at the ballot box those who seek to undermine the unique America-Israel relationship. Already, according to a Harris poll taken in late September, President Carter's popularity in the country at large has slipped for the first time below 50 per cent. Most of this decline is surely attributable to factors other than the administration's Middle East policy, yet just as surely that policy plays a part—especially for Jews, among whom Carter has fallen from July's standing of 57-37 per cent positive to a low of 60-37 per cent negative. (Jews, normally among the Democrats' most loyal supporters, were less favorable to Carter in this poll than blacks, Catholics, and unions, and over 10 per cent less favorable than the public as a whole.) But again, it is not only Jews who are concerned with the President's recent record on Israel and the Middle East. George Meany, interviewed on *Face the Nation* (October 2), warned that "I don't think the American people as a whole want to see Israel . . . compelled through strong diplomatic pressure." When asked what the consequences of such a policy might be for President Carter's reelection prospects in 1980, the labor leader replied, "Well, I don't know what it's going to do to him in 1980, or 1978, or any other time, but I know politically it's going to be a great big minus for him. I'm sure of that."

What our examination of the opinion polls reveals, then, is that a confrontation with Israel will create a deep conflict within the United States, one that could very well parallel the Vietnam controversy in its bitterness, and that could have a devastating effect on the popularity and the chances for reelection of those responsible.

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The Strange Case of George F. Kennan

From Containment to Isolationism

Edward N. Luttwak

GEORGE F. KENNAN has sufficient claim to be taken seriously when American foreign policy is discussed: indeed, many consider him the most eminent commentator on the subject. To his expressed discomfort, Mr. Kennan's widest public repute still derives from the 1947 "X" article in *Foreign Affairs,* which did duty as the great corrective to the willful delusion of Stalin's benevolence that the wartime alliance had engendered. By explaining that Soviet governance and Russian traditions would unfailingly conspire to force a brutal transition from alliance to outright hostility, regardless of any American concessions that might decently be offered, Mr. Kennan made himself the educator of the Truman administration, and the leading publicist of its Soviet policy.

Another man might have built enduring power on the sudden authority of his words, but Mr. Kennan's dominant emotion was already then a profound diffidence toward the enthusiasms of others; the same quality that had preserved his clear view of Russian realities while others were blinded by self-deception—and by the sincere solidarity of the struggle against Hitler—also prevented him from joining wholeheartedly in the great upsurge of energies of the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Alliance. His time in the mainstream of policy was accordingly brief; in Dean Acheson, the State Department soon acquired a master who admired Mr. Kennan's intellect but who also distrusted his judgment. Mr. Kennan's further service as a diplomat was not undistinguished, but he had little role in the formulation of policy. Instead of making foreign policy, he was to write of its making, in more than a dozen books, several historical and of significant scholarship, and all elegantly written. These works perpetuate his influence.

It is therefore a matter of some consequence that Mr. Kennan is to a large degree an isolationist. Not, to be sure, a total isolationist, or one whose motives are those of the crude provincial who would have us ignore everything of which he is ignorant. Still less is Mr. Kennan one of the isolationists of the Left, whose interest in foreign affairs might be intense but who seek to diminish the role of America abroad because they see it as inherently evil. Mr. Kennan knows much about the world, and he does not regard his own country as malevolent. It is, however, his belief that the United States is ill-suited to the task of conducting a foreign policy of global dimensions; accordingly he advocates "the reduction of external commitments to the indispensable minimum." Mr. Kennan defines this "minimum" as "the preservation of the political independence and military security of Western Europe, of Japan, and—with the single reservation that it should not involve the dispatch and commitment of American armed forces—of Israel."

This strategic prescription comes at the end of Mr. Kennan's latest book, *The Cloud of Danger,** a work prompted by his feeling that we have reached "a crucial parting of the ways: one road leading to a total militarization of policy, . . . the other to an effort to break out of the straight jacket of military rivalry and to strike through to a more constructive and hopeful vision of America's future and the world's."

The diverse essays of Mr. Kennan's new book cover all but a few of the concerns of an American Secretary of State. There are separate sections on no fewer than eighteen countries whose affairs are now of special interest for one reason or another (neither Canada nor Israel rates a section), and three whole chapters are devoted to the Soviet Union and U.S.-Soviet relations. One, subtitled "The Alarm," largely deals with the military power of the Soviet Union as seen, or perhaps as merely portrayed, by the "vociferous band" who have "an interest of one sort or another in military expenditures; those whose long-standing dream had been to see the United States committed to the overthrow of Soviet power; and those for whom a ringing show of anti-Communist belligerence and vigilance was the stock of political trade." Mr. Kennan does allow that there are others, "wholly unselfish and dedicated in motive," who also persist in fearing the growth of Soviet military power, but they are said to be blinded by a "highly bipolar view of international problems." The second chapter on the Soviet Union, subtitled "The Reality," naturally presents Mr. Kennan's own view of Russia.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK is associate director of the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research at Johns Hopkins.

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Mr. Kennan recognizes the "functional" issues also, in a chapter in which he writes of the "Impending Food Population Crisis," of environmental problems, and so on. It is in this chapter that Mr. Kennan is at his best and at his worst, in dealing with OPEC and the Third World, and with "Democracy as a World Cause" respectively. He neatly deflates the emotive dysfunction that passes for enlightened opinion on the subject of the Third World and its peremptory monetary claims for imaginary wrongs. But then there comes his already notorious view that democracy is the exclusive possession of northwestern Europeans, in place or transplanted. There is no need to condemn this view; hundreds of millions of Indians have already given it the fullest possible refutation. In countless translated interviews in print and on television, simple Indian villagers have offered evidence of the essential universality of the democratic ideal, and have explained that ideal with a clarity that many an American college student might profitably emulate.

THERE is one theme that emerges again and again throughout Mr. Kennan's book: the essentially chimerical nature of the military threats that are said to face us, which Mr. Kennan invariably sees as manufactured by the self-interested or at least as very greatly exaggerated, and the persistent insinuation that military power can never truly serve to protect our interests and ideals. One sees why Mr. Kennan retains a wide following among those still called liberals who are more precisely described as "defense minimalists," or more simply as "doves." But the constituency that would accept Mr. Kennan's self-denying strategic formula is actually far broader. Even many who find value in the military instrument in our foreign policy are attracted by the neat economy of Mr. Kennan's Western Europe-Japan perimeter, with Israel somewhat insecurely attached. In fact, in the strategic literature of the post-Vietnam years there has been much cutting and pasting of the world map in search of "optimal perimeters," complete with consumer-reports assessments of the desirability of including this or that country (Mr. Kennan, for example, defines his Western Europe very restrictively, and would view with favor the departure of Greece and Turkey from NATO).

It should come as no surprise that the glorified bookkeepers ("systems analysts") and managerial types in uniform who nowadays pass for strategists should indulge themselves playing with maps and drawing perimeter lines. But Mr. Kennan is also a competent historian, and he should know better: the exercise is inherently futile. The legitimate sphere of strategy is to define risks and costs, and the choices between them: is country X to be protected by an active defense which requires forces in place and corresponding expenditure, or is X to be protected by deterrence, which requires no additional forces but which entails a built-in escalation risk? Or, on a smaller scale, is the entire territory of X to be guarded by large and costly forces that can actually keep out an invader, or should the forces deployed forward suffice only to hold some part of X with an invader being driven out only *after* the fact, by forces brought from elsewhere?

At many levels and in many ways these are the questions that fall within our calculated choice. But there is no such freedom in determining whether X should be protected at all. The strategic goals of foreign policy are not to be decided by exercises in definition; they are defined for us by the very nature of our country, and by the circumstances of world politics. There are always those who will try to define *ab initio* an optimal set of strategic goals, as Mr. Kennan does, but such definitions are of no consequence.

It will be recalled that by 1950, both the civil and the military officials of the U.S. government had agreed that South Korea should be excluded from the American security perimeter in the Pacific. The decision was formally made and duly registered in the official planning documents. To the managerial mind, the exclusion of Korea was eminently sensible. As a non-industrial state with an overcrowded countryside, Korea's intrinsic worth was then small; on the other hand, since Korea is part of the East Asian mainland, it could not be fully defended with air and naval forces alone, America's strong suit; finally, South Korea seemed to have a relentless enemy in the North Korean regime. The low benefit, high possible costs, and high risks made the calculation very simple, while the absence of a powerful Korean-American community meant that the managerial decision would not be overturned by unreasoned congressional pressures.

Then, in the early morning of June 25, 1950, North Korean troops attacked across the North-South demarcation line. South Korea was still very poor; the peninsula was still irremediably attached to the Asian mainland, and its rescue would now undoubtedly require American troops on the ground; and the number of Korean-Americans ready to write to their Congressman had not appreciably increased. Nothing of relevance to the original decision had changed at all, and yet the policy was utterly overturned, precisely when the North Korean invasion made it operative. For it was then suddenly realized that the United States had become a Pacific power, and since the Pacific is unfortunately empty of significant land masses, the American perimeter would of necessity have to be withdrawn to the shores of Western America unless it rested on the East Asian rim (Hawaii and the islands of Micronesia could be no more than outposts). Finally, it could justifiably be feared that Japan would not allow itself to be held if the United States were to accept the conquest of South Korea without effective challenge: as soon as the end of the occupation allowed it to do so, Japan would extrude an American protector which did

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not protect. Hence the total and immediate reversal of the decision, and the large war that followed, which a firm American commitment clearly stated might well have averted.

As a senior participant, Mr. Kennan should have retained a clear memory of the Korean war, and should have pondered its deeper lessons. And yet he would now have us repeat the error. In *The Cloud of Danger*, he writes that the circumstances of 1950 do not obtain. "There is a fully independent and stable Japanese government. . . . Power in Moscow is in the hands of people who, whatever one thinks of them, represent a great change from the Soviet regime of Stalin's last years. It is doubtful that either Moscow or Peking wants to see at this juncture the sort of crisis that would be introduced by a renewal of civil war in Korea. To this must be added a very unhappy and disturbing factor: namely, the nature and behavior of the Park regime. . . ." He ends by prescribing a withdrawal. All that he writes is quite true, but quite marginal to the issue. A second Korean war would not be started by the rulers of Moscow or Peking but rather by Kim Il Sung, and whatever one may think of him, he does not represent a great change from the Kim Il Sung of 1950. As for Japan, it is undoubtedly stable but also, as Mr. Kennan writes, "fully independent" and as such likely to be entirely unwilling to be left isolated, and thus fully exposed to a still inimical China, a rabid Korea, and an always dangerous Soviet Union, protected only by constantly diminishing American naval and air forces.

Elsewhere in his book Mr. Kennan is eloquent on the importance of Japan, and quite rightly points out the grave dangers that would face us if the export capacity of the Japanese were to be redirected from civilian production for the West to military production for China or the Soviet Union, or both. Unfortunately one cannot order à la carte; the Japanese undoubtedly much prefer alliance with the United States, but they can hardly continue indefinitely to consign their security to our hands if we persevere in dismantling the military strength which is their protection. If forced to do so, they will reach a more secure accommodation with others. The Japanese share Mr. Kennan's distaste for the practices of the Park regime, but no amount of student-bashing in South Korea will lead them to prefer a Communist united Korea across the narrow straits from their home islands. If Mr. Kennan wants to order Japan, he must follow the set menu and have South Korea also.

As a historian of Russian foreign policy, Mr. Kennan should have recalled the example of another and greater illusion of free choice. The foreign policy of the Bolsheviks newly returned from exile was announced to the world in 1918 as entirely revolutionary: the Russian people would allow freedom to all the peripheral nationalities and the new Russian state would abjure expansion, renounce war and secret diplomacy, and rely instead on the class solidarity of the workers of the world. Yet in spite of the drastic change in the governance and entire society of Russia achieved by the revolution, the one thing that did not in the end change at all was precisely Russian foreign policy. All those millions of words spoken in the hopeful discussions of exile, all the pamphlets, speeches, and declarations, even the actual policies briefly followed immediately after Lenin's seizure of power, could not transcend the nature of the country and the circumstances of world politics. Very soon Soviet foreign policy became a perfectly direct continuation of the expansion program of Peter the Great and all the Czars. In the Soviet case also, the real strategic choices have been between costs and risks in the pursuit of goals given rather than chosen.

And of course in Mao's China also there has been a parallel reversion, in spite of radical change in all else. Today Peking tries to build a sphere of client states and seeks to divide powerful barbarians in a manner entirely traditional: in fact, even the classic procedures of the Middle Kingdom's diplomacy remain, with foreign envoys being received in Peking quite frequently while Chinese envoys rarely deign to return the visits. Nuclear deterrence must now replace the Great Wall, and the Chinese now worry about the inadequacy of their tanks instead of the traditional inferiority of their cavalry, but for all that, the Chinese policy-maker who would consult the ancient manuals of statecraft would not be indulging in mere antiquarian affectation. No amount of ideological invocation can alter the basic predicament of China, which must still determine its conduct in international affairs.

Mr. Kennan is undoubtedly aware of all this, and yet he has obviously failed to construe its meaning for our foreign policy: for the United States also, circumstances impose strategic goals which cannot arbitrarily be diminished to Mr. Kennan's "indispensable minimum." The attempt to limit effort by defining a narrow perimeter of responsibility may well invite aggression against all that is left out, and it will assuredly fail to limit the costs and risks of protecting what is left in. Neither what might be called the banker's perimeter (which happens to be Mr. Kennan's also), marked out by the clustering of high incomes per capita, nor the racial perimeter that would include Australia and New Zealand while perhaps excluding Japan, nor the raw-materials perimeter that would include the Persian Gulf but not Israel, has any meaning in the reality of world politics.

For it is the balance of power alone that will unfailingly determine what can be protected and how securely, and not any predetermined perimeter of convenience defined in the abstract. It is the relative military strength, economic leverage, and social influence of the United States as compared

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to its antagonists that defines the scope of American protection, influence, and access. If the United States continues to allow its relative military power to decline as compared to that of its antagonists, and principally the Soviet Union, sooner or later it may well be forced to retreat into Mr. Kennan's restricted perimeter, if not beyond. But the reverse does not obtain; if the United States were to abandon all but Western Europe and Japan, this would not allow it to reduce its military power with impunity, as Mr. Kennan seems to believe. On the contrary, the industrial democracies under siege would probably need much more military power than they now have, merely to survive.

The crude tactical analogy that underlies all the post-Vietnam perimeter strategies, as well as those classically isolationist, does not resist scrutiny. The suggestion is that a smaller area of responsibility can be protected with smaller military forces, just as a smaller body of soldiers may suffice to hold a shorter defense line. But this is only true if the enemy gains no power from the terrain abandoned. Had Hitler been given a free hand to organize Europe, he would most probably have emerged from an eventual continental victory with both nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, thus nullifying the naval defense on which the isolationist strategy depended. If the Soviet Union were now given a free run all over the world but for Western Europe and Japan, it too would eventually nullify Western defenses, by exploiting raw-material vulnerabilities and also by controlling the sea lanes between Western Europe and Japan, if not between the United States and both. Before any defenses were so reduced, it is more than likely that the United States would find itself quite alone, since both the nations of Western Europe and Japan would in prudence reach accommodation with Russia.

The appropriate tactical analogy is quite different from the one underlying the post-Vietnam perimeter strategies. If unopposed, even a small body of soldiers can dominate much territory, but if faced by superior strength it may not be able to defend even a cluster of foxholes. And so it is for us: the determining factor in setting the minimum level of our own military effort is the rising military power of our antagonists, and chiefly the Soviet Union, and the cost to us cannot unfortunately be contained by any arbitrary geographic limitation of our responsibilities. This is not a pretty state of affairs, but Mr. Kennan's formula will not assist us in evading the predicament that unavoidably became ours when Britain's decline and the collapse of France left the United States as the chief protector of its own interests.

MR. KENNAN'S opinions on the Third World and the North-South issues are eminently sensible; his analysis of the oil-price crisis and OPEC is replete with hard truths that deserve close attention; on many other questions large and small, from Southern Africa to the Panama Canal and from international economic policy to the procedures of our diplomacy, Mr. Kennan's book reveals the wisdom of long experience and high intellect combined. Why then the gross misconception of his overall strategy which undermines his good advice on particular matters?

As in the case of so many of our opinion-makers, Mr. Kennan is motivated by an overwhelming desire to diminish the absolute magnitude of American military power. It is perhaps symptomatic that his first words on the subject on the ninth page of the book are headed by the tired cliché, "Military-Industrial Complex," and that the quality of Mr. Kennan's prose suffers markedly whenever he writes of military things. He begins by noting that 6 per cent of the total national product is now absorbed by "the Pentagon." Since the major potential antagonists of the United States are now devoting much higher percentages of their GNP's to defense, the 6 per cent should be the subject of much self-congratulation. But Mr. Kennan's standards are his own, and do not reflect the circumstances of the world; his attitude is severe. He proceeds to argue that military expenditures are strongly inflationary because of "the lavish way in which money is used, as compared with functions that are obliged to meet the normal competition of private life."

Mr. Kennan informs the reader that he has lately found confirmation for his views. "Having written this, I note the following passage from an article . . . by Mr. Seymour Melman, Professor of Industrial Engineering at Columbia University." And he quotes. Characteristically, Mr. Kennan, who is otherwise so careful in choosing the few authorities he cites, slips badly when he quotes on military things. Mr. Kennan is obviously unaware that his authority is not a disinterested scholar driven to write by some late discovery, but rather a full-time critic of the military establishment, willing to attack any defense project on economic, environmental, diplomatic, or moral grounds interchangeably, and who would no doubt oppose defense expenditures just as strongly even if by some miracle their effect were to be deflationary.

Mr. Kennan next issues an admonition: those who are concerned with the military balance should "give more attention to . . . inflation . . . and less to efforts to convince the rest of us of the menacing intentions and fearful strength of our Soviet opponents." More of the same follows in a rather personal vein and in sub-standard prose ("One time, when I was . . . watching several forms of target practice, I was struck by the realization that each one of a certain class of missiles that were being fired off with great abandon . . . cost more than my entire Pennsylvania farm").

One would have imagined that Mr. Kennan the historian would remember that historically the United States has grossly underspent on defense. With forces too small to deter war in 1939 and 1941, the United States was compelled thereafter

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to field troops with inferior weapons in many cases, because of drastic pre-war economies that restricted the development of new weapons. It was not, for example, until 1943 that the United States acquired fighter aircraft that could match those of the Germans and Japanese, and it was not until the last weeks of World War II that American troops received tanks that could fight those of the Germans on even terms. And in Korea again American troops found themselves ill-equipped in fighting much poorer enemies because of the extreme economies of the pre-conflict defense budgets. One recognizes the enormity of firing million-dollar missiles for target practice, but it would be no less outrageous if the soldiers of the richest society on earth were once again to face their enemies recklessly unprovided.

For all the emotional intensity that Mr. Kennan's words reveal when he is writing on the subject, it would be unfair to suggest that his refusal to give military power its due reflects only an emotional revulsion. Of equal significance is Mr. Kennan's honest inability to appreciate the role of military power in the broader context of foreign policy, as well as a peculiar difficulty in understanding even the simplest technical aspects of modern military power, on which he nevertheless writes at some length.

The clearest example of his first and decisive shortcoming occurs in his comments on European security:

> With respect to the Soviet Union there has been established in the minds of many of the Europeans a certain fixed pattern of thought . . . [which] consists in the unshakable belief: (1) that Soviet leaders are keenly desirous of launching an attack on Western Europe; (2) that without the commitment of America's nuclear power neither the Western Europeans, nor they and the Americans together, would have the faintest chance of resisting successfully an onslaught of this nature . . .; and (3) that the Russians have been deterred from launching such an attack only by the threat of American nuclear retaliation.

Now what is really very remarkable about these propositions is that they bear no relationship to any seriously representative European views. First, the Europeans plainly have *not* regarded a Soviet attack as imminent, otherwise they would no doubt have been willing to devote greater resources for their own defense. In fact, it was only in 1950-52 that there was among many Europeans genuine fear of a Soviet attack, a fear prompted by the all too real attack in Korea. Ever since then it has always been the *Americans* who have stressed the immediacy of the Soviet threat in NATO councils, while the European view has always been distinctly more relaxed. It is quite astonishing that Mr. Kennan should ignore the amply documented record on this matter, with which even the most casual observers of NATO are familiar.

His second proposition is also entirely in error: the Europeans have never believed that a Soviet attack could only be resisted by American nuclear weapons. Rather, they quite rightly prefer a strategy that would seek to avert war by nuclear *deterrence*—which puts the lives of Russians and Americans at risk together with their own—as opposed to a strategy of non-nuclear *defense*, in which the rival armies would prepare to fight it out in the fields and cities of Central Europe with great destruction, while Russian and American civil life would remain unattacked.

In the third proposition, Mr. Kennan has his Europeans believing that a Russian invasion has been prevented so far only by American nuclear deterrence. But European views on this point are diverse; once again, it has always been the Americans who have taken the more pessimistic view. The military threat of the Soviet armies now poised to attack Europe is not to be dismissed, but as Mr. Kennan himself acknowledges, this has not been the operative consideration. It is not the eventual, one-time threat of an attack that must concern us, Europeans and Americans alike, but rather the permanent impact of Soviet military power on the Europeans' freedom of political action. NATO may or may not have deterred a war otherwise contemplated, but it has certainly served to deny the Russians the dominant political influence over Western Europe which they undoubtedly keenly desire. It is odd to find that the unmilitary Mr. Kennan thinks only of the potential combat role of military forces and does not appreciate their continuing political function. The Russians now successfully employ their military forces to overawe Eastern Europe into a reluctant obedience, and they actively seek a measure of political control over Western Europe as well. Indeed it is only natural that they should try: lacking economic leverage, cultural influence, or social appeal, they must do what they can with their one effective source of power. At one point Mr. Kennan satirizes this prosaic view of Soviet intentions, but nowhere does he refute it in reasoned discourse.

IT WOULD be unkind to list every example of Mr. Kennan's inability to comprehend the technical military questions on which he writes. Indeed, one is tempted in courtesy to avoid the subject altogether. But of late it has become quite customary for the wholly unqualified to pass judgment on matters which require an irreducible minimum of technical competence, and if these pretensions are left unchallenged, questions already highly complex will needlessly be further confused by avoidable errors of fact. One instance suffices. In discussing nuclear testing, Mr. Kennan argues that the United States should offer to ban all tests, on a basis of reciprocity with the Soviet Union. Others may differ, but as in the case of any complex strategic issue, there is room for entirely legitimate disagreement. But then Mr.

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Kennan goes on to write: ". . . the main purpose of these tests, as now pursued, is to find some gimmick that will suddenly give us an edge over the Russians. . . . And this is exactly the kind of thinking that is going to have to stop, if this mad proliferation of nuclear destructive power is ever to be halted and reversed."

Mr. Kennan's emotional appeal is inspired by a gross error of fact. The "main purpose" of American nuclear testing is not now, and has not been for many years, to find "some gimmick" that would give us an advantage over the Russians. The main purpose of American nuclear testing is in fact to validate for production safer and *less* destructive weapons in order to minimize fallout as well as unnecessary damage off-target, and more particularly to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized explosions.

Thus, for example, the standard strategic bomb of today is very much less powerful than the bombs of the early 1960's, while having on the other hand altogether more reliable safety and control devices. It is not the hope of gaining an advantage over the Russians that motivates the work of the laboratories at Los Alamos and elsewhere, but rather the knowledge that much remains to be done to reduce further the risk of unintended explosions. When a man of some eminence commits to print purported statements of fact, his readers are entitled to assume that he has made reasonable efforts to insure accuracy. Information on the purposes of American nuclear-weapons development is widely available, and Mr. Kennan could have avoided the error for the price of a few minutes of cursory reading.

But there is also another quite different and altogether more legitimate basis of Mr. Kennan's strategy of qualified isolationism. In persuasively challenging the notion that the industrialized world is somehow responsible for the poverty of the Third World, and that it must now correct the disparity by sacrificing its own prosperity, Mr. Kennan evokes a memory of his native Wisconsin:

> I have before me, as I write, a faded snapshot, . . . of the log house in which my great-grandparents lived when they first came in 1851, to the Green Bay region of Wisconsin: a crude, almost windowless structure, standing in a dreary treeless field. And I am moved to recall that the Wisconsin of that day was very much what we today would call an underdeveloped country. Well, these people worked hard, and . . . Wisconsin prospered . . . under their ministrations. . . . Had we Wisconsinites been a lazy, violent, improvident people, devoted more to war than to industry—had we wasted what little substance we had on civil strife of one sort or another, or had we been for other reasons unsuccessful . . . would we today be seen as the possessors of a peculiar virtue vis-à-vis the more developed countries entitling us to put claims on their beneficence and to demand of them that they exert themselves to promote our development? . . . And is no credit whatsoever to be given in this modern world for the old-fashioned American virtues of thrift, honesty, tolerance, civic discipline, and hard work?

Here, then, are the classic roots of the isolationist position, revealed in the course of a quite unanswerable argument against the white guilt complex and its absurdities. Like the Orthodox Jew who on Passover thanks the Lord for saving him —and not just his ancestors—from the Egyptian bondage, and who gives thanks for his own safe conveyance across the Red Sea, Mr. Kennan too identifies with the pioneer experience. He sees himself driven by persecution or poverty from the Old World to the wilderness of America, only to find that as soon as he has by hard work, self-sacrifice, and civic virtue created wealth and tranquility, the Old World begins to make demands upon the strength and prosperity of the New—demands which reflect precisely the Old World's failure to avoid war and "civil strife."

These are not sentiments that can lightly be dismissed. There is so much natural beauty and man-made wealth in America, still so much opportunity for creative pursuits, and still so much scope for individual action, that concern for the outside world may easily seem a costly and entirely dispensable burden. Even those who lack snapshots of great-grandparental log houses are apt to suffer from the temptation to cast this burden off. Unfortunately, it is the modern predicament of America that the only practical strategy is one of involvement. The security of America itself must derive from a tolerable balance of power with its potential adversaries, and a balance of power is more easily maintained with allies than without. An America without allies could undoubtedly avoid the dangers of peripheral conflicts fought in their defense, but it would ultimately be exposed to the formidable threat of some regime, probably Soviet, which had organized the resources of all Europe and beyond to muster inordinate strength against the United States. And an America without allies would even before then have to suffer the demoralization of seeing its own values repudiated and scorned in other lands, as well as a sense of psychic isolation so intense that it would be shared by all but the most insular of Americans, and certainly by intellectuals such as Mr. Kennan.

If the necessity of an immediate circle of allies is recognized, as it is in Mr. Kennan's minimalist formula, the logic of collective security, the regional concerns of each primary ally, and the maintenance of a global balance of power will certainly require a further and wider sphere of secondary involvement. This is not a desirable chain of necessities for America, since the pursuits of power are inherently sterile. But it is the clear lesson of the century that any attempt to evade our strategic predicament unfailingly entails a heavy price in blood and treasure. That is why we must reject Mr. Kennan's counsel of evasion.

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The Example of Isaac Babel

Simon Markish

ISAAC BABEL fits perfectly into the landscape of Soviet literature of the 1920's. Thematically, his collection of short fiction, *Red Cavalry*, takes its place alongside the stories of Vsevolod Ivanov, Dmitri Furmanov's *Chapayev*, Alexander Fadeyev's *The Rout*, and innumerable other works on the civil war. The naturalism of *Red Cavalry*—its brutal depiction of elemental forces unleashed by the revolution—is not more remarkable or more terrifying than what can be found in Vsevolod Ivanov or Artem Vesely; its style is not more colorful then the bewitching verbal tissue of Andrei Platonov, or the inimitable palette of Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*. As for the exotic underworld of Babel's *Odessa Tales* and of his play, *Sunset*, both of which reflect a general interest in criminal life (as well as in subjects related to the borderlands and "aliens," Jews included), this finds parallels in such works as V. Kaverin's *The End of Khaza*, or Leonid Leonov's *The Thief*. Even Babel's notorious silence, his catastrophically low output after *Sunset* (1928), and the relative weakness of that work compared with his work of the 1920's, are merely an extreme form of the disease and crisis that afflicted all of Soviet literature at the turn of the decade.*

It was no slip of the tongue and no exaggeration when Stalin called 1929 the "year of the great breaking point." That year marked the threshold not only of great economic and social upheavals—the destruction of the peasantry, industrialization, the beginning of the new autocracy and of a new terror—it also signaled the fundamental reconstruction of the young Soviet culture. For all the blindness and randomness of the Great Purges, which struck out right and left indiscriminately, there is no denying them a certain logic, which can be discerned in their results: everything was liquidated that stood out from the rank and file, that did not blend with the general mass, or was unable to fall into line behind the party leadership, without hesitation or complaint. Naturally, there were exceptions, but it was not by chance that Titian Tabidze or Pavel Vasiliev disappeared, while Nikolai Tikhonov and Alexander Prokofiev were spared and allowed to flourish. Nor was the destruction of Babel a matter of chance. Soviet literature of the 1940's and 1950's had no place for the likes of him.

And yet Babel does stand out obviously and sharply among his contemporaries. The reasons for this preoccupied critics during his lifetime, and have done so since his posthumous rehabilitation. Some have spoken simply about his talent and its uniqueness. Others have offered explanations based on his experiments in genre, his special brand of romanticism, the peculiarities of his character and his personal fate. Without rejecting any of these arguments, I would like to concentrate exclusively on one circumstance of fundamental importance, Babel's tie to Russian-Jewish literature.

I do not mean Babel's Jewish origin or his Jewish mentality. Others have written on that before, and continue to do so. Thus we read in an article by Pavel Novitskii, published in 1928: "Babel has a passionate, dry, precise Jewish mind. . . . A solemn seriousness and concentrated severity make his work true and sharp. . . . He is wearied by the dense melancholy of memory. The past (in his phrase, 'the rotted Talmuds of his memories') holds him fast in its grip. He is incapable of drastic action." More recently, the French critic Judith Stora-Sandor has similarly stressed Babel's Jewishness: his religiosity, his knowledge of Yiddish, his youthful study of Hebrew, the Bible, and the Talmud; his loyalty to Jewish traditions, both familial and social; his passion for Hasidism which, in Miss Stora-Sandor's view, led him on to Tolstoyanism. Her conclusion: "It was precisely due to his Jewish interests that Babel, the *Soviet* writer, became also a *Jewish* writer. In making himself the

SIMON MARKISH, who was born in 1931, is the son of the Soviet Yiddish writer Peretz Markish, murdered under Stalin in 1952. Mr. Markish left the Soviet Union in 1970; since 1974 he has been in Geneva, where he teaches at the university. A classical philologist by training, he has translated such authors as Plutarch, Plato, Sallust, Apuleius, Erasmus, and Ulrich von Hutten. In Russia he published books on Homer and Erasmus. He has now completed a book-length study, "Erasmus and the Jews," and is working on "Sketches of Russo-Jewish Literature Before 1917." The present essay has been translated from the Russian by DONALD FANGER and HARRY SHUKMAN.

* In English, both *Red Cavalry* and the *Odessa Tales*, as well as other stories, are available in *The Collected Stories of Isaac Babel*, edited and translated by Walter Morison, Introduction by Lionel Trilling, Meridian/NAL, 381 pp., $3.95.

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mouthpiece of his fellow Jews, without locking himself up within the close confines of their restricted community, as the Yiddish writers did, Babel tried to demonstrate the practical possibility of uniting two souls, the Jewish and the Russian."

Where Novitskii connects the Jewish "past" with weakness and indecisiveness, and with these alone, Miss Stora-Sandor wraps her definition of what makes a "Jewish" writer in an equally dense fog of half-understanding or even total misunderstanding. Babel, in fact, did not "become" a Jewish writer, he had always been one. He did not choose to write in a particular language, as did Mendele Mokher Seforim, or Hayyim Nahman Bialik; for him, the Russian literary tradition was natural, organic, and the only one possible. As for the supposed opposition between Yiddishist exclusivity and Babel's "universality," that is as senseless as the notion of his striving to unite the Jewish and Russian "souls."

By the time of Babel's first literary efforts, a Russian-Jewish literature already existed. It had arisen immediately after the first shoots of Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) appeared on Russian soil in the 19th century. This movement, which aimed at bringing the Jews out of their isolation in the ghetto, had as one of its main objects the introduction of the Jews to the culture and especially to the language of the indigenous population. In Germany, where the movement originated, the German language was assimilated quickly and successfully, owing partly to its closeness to Yiddish and partly to the greater material well-being of the Jewish population. In the Russian empire, the followers of Moses Mendelssohn, the father of Haskalah, encountered enormous difficulties. Yet despite the appalling poverty and congestion of the Jewish masses; despite the inconsistency of government policy, first fostering the enlightenment of the Jews, then obstructing it, first hoping for their assimilation, then fearing "Jewish domination"; and despite the decisive turn to repression and restriction under Alexander III, Russian-Jewish literature did indeed develop, and it generated its own growing readership.

Already by the turn of the 20th century, then—or at any rate by the eve of World War I—Russian had become one of the languages of the Jewish Diaspora. Notwithstanding the unquestionable predominance of Yiddish, a certain section of the Jewish intelligentsia, notably in Odessa, Kiev, and St. Petersburg, had become Russian-speaking; there was widespread and accomplished Russian-Jewish journalism, historiography, belles-lettres; periodicals and books were being published in large numbers. The rise of Russian-Jewish literature at the beginning of the 20th century was enhanced by emergent Zionism, which rejected Yiddish and adopted Russian as a stepping-stone to Hebrew, a language undergoing its own renaissance.

The Russian-Jewish literature of the pre-revolutionary period was a literature written in Russian by Jews for Jews, and one way or another charged with Jewish themes. Even if a Russian-Jewish writer succeeded in attracting the attention of the Russian reading public—as was the case with the poet Semyon Frug or, later and with greater significance, David Aizman and Semyon Iushkevich—he still remained outside the bounds of Russian literature proper, and was perceived as an alien or exotic phenomenon. And so indeed he was.

The Revolution changed things fundamentally. Leaving aside the social and political changes which turned the life of Russian Jewry inside out, let us consider one circumstance of a general nature which seems not yet to have received the attention it merits. Since the Revolution the Soviet regime has in truth created a new, unified culture —not "socialist in content, national in form," as the official formula has it, but an imperial *Russian* culture which continuously absorbs the best (by whatever standard) that is created in the provinces. Only translation into Russian, performance on the Moscow stage, exhibition on the Moscow screen or in Moscow galleries confers real life on an artistic production. And that, with very few exceptions, is what every artist works for. This has produced a curious analogy to the imperial culture of ancient Rome, which was created by the united efforts of the Italians, Gauls, Spaniards, Africans, and Greeks—and in which, with the passage of time, the proportional contribution of the provinces became more and more significant. Thus Soviet literature today is inconceivable without Vasil Bykov (a Byelorussian), Okudzhava (a Georgian), Faizul Iskander (an Abkhaz), or Genghis Aitmatov (a Kirghiz), all of whom either write in Russian or translate their own work into Russian. Another parallel with ancient Rome: just as the label "provincial" covers Seneca (whose Spanish origins are undetectable in his work) and Apuleius (clearly a Hellenized North African, in literature as in life), so Okudzhava is Georgian in name only, while Oljas Suleimenov is a passionate Kazakh nationalist. In other words, the national markings of the alien who has entered imperial Russian-language literature fluctuate within very wide limits, so that in extreme situations new branches emerge; thus, in the case of Suleimenov, we are plainly dealing with a Russian-Kazakh, or possibly Russian-Turkic, branch of Soviet literature.

All this must be borne in mind in order to understand the fate of Russian-Jewish literature and its role in the Soviet period. As an independent and isolated cultural phenomenon, it was liquidated along with neo-Jewish (Hebrew) literature. This was a politically motivated, violent action, one of the important moves in the Bolsheviks'

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struggle against Zionism and national-cultural autonomy, and it represented a systematic carrying out of the Bolshevik program as drawn up before the Revolution.

In the course of the 1920's, all the Russian-Jewish periodicals were gradually closed down, and the leading figures of Russian-Jewish literature either died, emigrated, or fell silent. But from the very beginning a considerable number of Jews had gone into Soviet-Russian literature. Many of them never in any way evinced any connection with Judaism, even in those far-off times when to be a Jew was positively encouraged. Examples are Benjamin Kaverin, the prose writer, and the poet Alexander Bezymenskii (the level of talent is irrelevant here); in a later period one might cite Emmanuel Kazakevich, who began writing in Yiddish but went over to Russian after the war and in the entire corpus of his Russian work betrayed not a hint of anything Jewish. Among Russian writers of Jewish origin, however, a fair number exhibited (and continue to exhibit) national characteristics, though in very varying quantities and forms, depending on general circumstances and personal situation. The 1920's and 1930's are particularly rich in examples of this, revealing a freshness and directness in literary reminiscences of distinctively Jewish life, made possible by the absence of official anti-Semitism. By contrast, the last years of the Stalin regime, which saw the peak of anti-Semitic terror, are almost totally sterile. Then, in the second half of the 1950's and the 1960's, came a resurgence of a new kind, an explosion of a people's frustrated dignity (no matter that its positive self-awareness, its cultural "baggage," might be scant or even nonexistent).

However disparate the forms and quantities involved, works with a Jewish orientation do constitute a certain whole—for which two claims, at least, can fairly be made: they represent the first—and, up to now, the most significant—non-Russian branch of Soviet-Russian literature; and despite their inseparability from the imperial literature described above, they are the direct descendants of pre-revolutionary Russian-Jewish literature, and can be studied and understood only in relation to the latter. (To these two claims a third might well be added: it is that Russian-Jewish literature of the Soviet period might instructively be considered alongside such parallel phenomena as contemporary American-Jewish, Anglo-Jewish, and Franco-Jewish literature from a whole range of standpoints.)

AT THE very headwaters of the Russian-Jewish literature of the Soviet period stands Isaac Babel. Or perhaps one should say that he himself was its main source—to which its peculiarities, its development, and its role within Soviet literature are in large measure traceable.

The daily life and cultural background from which Babel came played an important role in his creative life. He grew up in Odessa, in a family that was economically comfortable. (It may be pertinent to note here that many details in his quasi-autobiographical Odessa stories are invented out of whole cloth, as for example the assertion, "I come from a poverty-stricken wreck of a family.") A substantial part of the Jewish population, which in the year of Babel's birth, 1894, formed one-third, and on the eve of the revolution one-half, of the total population of Odessa, had left the old traditional and enclosed Jewish life far behind. Theirs was the path of assimilation—in the original and literal meaning of that term, "becoming like"; what they had in view was adaptation, perhaps even the first step toward integration. Despite pogroms, persecution, and discrimination, the situation in Odessa was not unlike that in America: a blending with the surrounding milieu, and at the same time a secure sense of group community, with the synagogue as spiritual and organizational (rather than purely religious) center. This situation was unique in Russia; there was nothing like it in any of the other centers of Jewish culture, neither in St. Petersburg, Kiev, nor Vilna. That the contribution of Jewish Odessa to the nascent Soviet culture proved so large was thus no accident.

According to Babel's sister, at home the parents spoke Yiddish to each other and Russian to the children. This may have been the case—it was typical enough in Odessa at the time. And yet (as we learn from his letters, published in English in 1964 as *Isaac Babel: The Lonely Years*), Babel knew Yiddish well enough to edit the collected works of Sholem Aleichem in Russian translation, expressed the desire to translate *Tevye the Dairyman*, and did in fact translate David Bergelson's tale, *Dzhiro-Dzhiro*. What is even more important, he read Yiddish not simply for professional reasons but for his own pleasure, sitting before the fire at his *dacha* outside Moscow; in one letter to his mother, he calls Yiddish "our language."

Babel studied at a commercial school, together, according to his *Autobiography*, with "the sons of foreign merchants, children of Jewish brokers, imposing Poles, Old Believers, and many overgrown billiard players." In that motley place, and in the dockside cafés and billiard halls, he not only absorbed the language of the Russian classics, he also fell in love with that special Odessa dialect, half-Russian, half-Ukrainian, in which even today the strong Jewish intonation and phrasing are evident. In school he also learned French, so well that after only two years he was writing stories in that language. But during the same period, for about six years, from age ten to sixteen, he was studying biblical and talmudic teaching as well, and was thus able (in 1926) to approve the Hebrew translation of six of his tales.

Miss Stora-Sandor asserts that Babel was reli-

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gious. This seems not quite accurate; he is on record too often with public denials of God's existence (for instance, the end of his speech at the First [Soviet] Writers' Congress), and no one who knows his life and work would accuse Babel of hypocrisy. Yet religious traditions were an inseparable part of his nature. He punctiliously sent greetings to his parents on the High Holidays in the fall and at Passover, always mentioning that he himself intended to celebrate as far as possible, and lamenting that his possibilities were so meager and poor. In his letters he asks his mother if she has been to the synagogue, and, after attending the synagogue in Odessa himself for the New Year service, he tells her how "everything was so painfully familiar, I am terribly glad I went and, as always, I prayed in my own way to my own, other God, above all for you both" (i.e., his mother and his sister).

The "above all" is not an exaggeration. Babel's love and attachment to his family, which may seem surprising and excessive to the present-day generation, is an age-old and important tradition of the Jewish Diaspora, and Babel clearly understood the nature of his family feelings. So when he says that at every minute and every hour he is sharing in spirit the sufferings of his family, and would give everything to be able to do so physically, he adds the comment: "Look what a classic Jewish family-man I've become." Again and again in his letters he recalls his late father: he swears to carry out everything he had promised this father who had always expected success, not complaints, from his children; thus, thoughts of his father give him strength and drive away despair. In consciously accepting tradition, Babel was also trying to sustain it, if only symbolically, in the family which had been torn apart by his wife's emigration from Russia. When his daughter was born in Paris, he asked his wife to give her a real Jewish name—in vain: instead of "Judith," Natasha made her appearance in the world in 1929.

It is understandable that Babel should have loved Odessa as no other city in the world. He regarded it as the only place where he could really work, and he dreamed of returning there to live, traveling to Moscow only on business. It is understandable too that each visit, no matter how impoverished and provincialized the city had become, should bring him great pleasure. His spirit and his brain were refreshed. His ears were caressed by the Odessa accent. Newspaper boys, garbage collectors, janitors would greet him on the street and engage him in the most improbable conversations, of a sort that could only be heard in Odessa. After an evening at the theater, where he delivered a few utterly unmemorable remarks, thousands of young people lined the streets and blocked the path of his car. So it is understandable that he should have refused to emigrate with his mother, his wife, and his sister. Apart from his genuine Soviet patriotism—of which more later—the feeling was too strong in him of belonging to Russian Jewry, to that cultural milieu, in the broadest sense, which existed nowhere else in the world and of which the focus, the quintessence, was old Odessa. Even for so "poignant" a writer as Babel, the nostalgic lines he wrote about Odessa, in his brief note on Edward Bagritskii, sound unusually poignant: "I remember our last conversation. We agreed it was time to get out of strange towns, time to go home, to Odessa, to take a little house on Blizhnie Melnitsy, to write chronicles, to grow old. . . .We saw ourselves as old men, sly, portly old men, warming ourselves in the Odessa sun, on the boulevard by the sea, and following the women with a long gaze. . . ."

STILL, the Jewish background, Jewish traditions and emotional attachments, are not in themselves enough. The writer or artist may recall his Jewish youth with tenderness and yearning, he may prefer gefilte fish with red-hot horseradish above all other food and drink, he may indulge himself with matzot and even pop into the synagogue a couple of times a year, but none of that entitles him to a place in Jewish culture, or in a Jewish encyclopedia. This can only come when his entire creative life, or a good part of it, has taken form under the influence of Jewish self-awareness. Babel's moment of self-awareness and choice arrived rather early, and antedates his appearance in print. Two crucial pieces of work, written at the end of 1915, provide the evidence—"Childhood II: At Grandmother's," and a fragment, "Three O'Clock in the Afternoon"—both of them entirely Jewish in theme and, more importantly, in the subjectivity that informs them.

The first is a sketch of a day spent at his grandmother's. House and grandmother together evoke this response in the boy: "Everything seemed strange to me. I wanted at the same time to run away from it all and to stay there forever." Here a familiar routine and atmosphere undergo an abrupt transformation, take on a piercing novelty, inspiring simultaneously horror (or perhaps revulsion) and a feeling for what is "one's own," ineluctable and permanent. Here we have essentially the whole Jewish Babel, the basis of his social and emotional values and the foundation of his aesthetics. Jewishness of whatever kind—the steadfastly traditional, the *shtetl*-hasidic, or the urban-emancipated—is perceived dualistically. The heritage is at once accepted and rejected, a fact which precludes simple social realism along with apologetics and denunciation—the three characteristic stances of the old Russian-Jewish literature. What appears in their stead is a fresh perspective from a new vantage point; sheer astonishment is no small part of it. Here is the source of that exoticism of the quotidian, that fantastic sharpness of line and

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violent emotionality which are the mark of Babel's style. But here, at the same time, is the source of his loneliness; dooming him to the role of outsider, always and with everyone.*

The fragment, "Three O'Clock in the Afternoon," was published in an obscure journal only in 1971, and is generally unobtainable. It has been described by a Soviet critic, however, as a combination of "plotless lyrical narration saturated with precise psychological details which constitute a second level" and a vivid story "with heightened emphasis on individual speech." Thus, long before *Red Cavalry* and the *Odessa Tales*, but at the time when his general position had crystallized (and, obviously, as a result of that crystallization), Babel discovers, at least in principle, the expressive means and the manner which were to become his hallmark. The moment of registering this self-awareness is the moment of Babel's self-invention as a writer.

The novelty of his position involved a new approach to his subject matter. Until then it had not been possible to imagine a work of Russian-Jewish literature on a non-Jewish subject. Now the author's attitude to his material acquires greater importance: his dual vision, from within and without, deepens his imagery and gives it a dimension which it had not and could not have known before.

But if the approach "from outside" had been construed only negatively, as synonymous with "not inside," if the phrase "I wanted to run away from it all," had simply signified flight, then we would not be able to speak of the dimension that comes from binocular vision. The Bolshevik Revolution gave Babel a second vantage point, another feeling of belonging, as indisputable as the first. I have already remarked that even the best and most famous Russian-Jewish writers were alien beings to the non-Jewish reader. But these writers felt themselves to be aliens in Russian literature, guests at best. For Babel, however, Soviet-Russian literature was as much hearth and home as it was to Vsevolod Ivanov, and I am convinced that Babel's loyalty to the Soviet regime, his love for Soviet Russia, his importuning of his family to return from emigration, especially in 1934-35, are in many ways connected with this. After returning from his first trip abroad, he wrote that he felt well in his native land, even if there was poverty and a great deal of misery; here he had his language and his material, the only things he found truly and inexhaustibly interesting. This disposition remained intact even during the 1930's—like the Jewish heritage, Soviet life was for him his rightful property, and more: his creation.

IT FOLLOWS that until this dual support was found, the real Babel did not exist. His first stories, published in 1916, are equally feeble, whether they have Jewish themes ("Ilia Isaakovich and Margarita Prokofievna"), or non-Jewish ("Mama, Rimma, and Alla"). His first success, *Red Cavalry*, was destined to prove his largest one as well—because here, as in no other work, he drew on *both* his supports with such assurance and strength.

Kirill Vasilievich Liutov, the narrator and protagonist of *Red Cavalry*, is not Babel, even though the writer gave him the name under which he himself had served in the First Cavalry Army as correspondent for a military newspaper. Liutov is half of him, the Jewish half that is frantically in quest of a complementary, revolutionary, Bolshevik half. " 'Gedali,' I said, 'today is Friday and it's evening already. Where can I get hold of some Jewish biscuits, a Jewish glass of tea, and a bit of that pensioned-off God in the glass of tea?' " ("Gedali"). Jewishness gives him his bearings in the savage and bloody, longed-for and unattainable, Revolution. Thus, although the death of the hero and pillager, Trunov, is not connected with the Galician village of Sokal, except geographically, Liutov nevertheless gives a detailed (detailed, that is, for Babel—two paragraphs) account of the ancient synagogues and torn gabardines, of the noisy wrangling of the Orthodox and Hasidim, and he concludes: "Heavy-hearted because of Trunov, I too went pushing among them, shouting along with them to ease my sorrow" ("Squadron Commander Trunov"). The ending of the famous "Discourse on the Tachanka," which appears at first glance to have no connection with the rest of the text, is in fact a most important paragraph on the Jews of Galicia and Volhynia. The son of a Zhitomir rebbe, "the last prince of the dynasty," the Red Army man Bratslavskii, a party member who had prayed in his father's synagogue because he felt unable to leave his mother, comes to understand that "in the Revolution a mother is only an episode," and, sent by his organization to take charge of a combat regiment, dies of typhus on the filthy floor of the news-correspondents' railroad car. The contents of his trunk are as mixed as those of his brief biography: "Agitator's orders and booklets of a Jewish poet, portraits of Lenin and Maimonides, pages from the Song of Songs, and bullets for his revolver." "He died, the last prince, amid verses, phylacteries, and leg windings. And I, barely able to contain the gales of my imagination within my ancient body, received the last gasp of my brother" ("The Rebbe's Son").

The Red Army man Bratslavskii is more than Liutov's brother, he is his double. He sacrifices all, asking for nothing and claiming nothing, except revolutionary solidarity. Yet he dies in solitude, under the indifferent gaze of "Cossacks in red

* This position afforded invaluable artistic advantages, and Babel made the most of them throughout his life; in this he anticipates the best American-Jewish writers, from Henry Roth to Saul Bellow and Philip Roth.

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baggy trousers" and "two big-breasted typists in sailors' jackets," having been wrested by his "brother" from the mass of typhus-ridden peasants who "rolled before them the customary hump of a soldier's death" and "wheezed and scratched and flew on wordlessly." He had been alone even in that crowd; indeed, his "brother" recognizes him by his solitude: he is the only one to reach out for a pamphlet, while all the others vie with each other to grab the potatoes Liutov is scattering from the wagon. The narrative of the story is addressed to an unknown Vasilii, whose name is mentioned insistently, almost importunately, five times in two pages. This persistence rests on the opposition of brother with stranger; to the latter, no matter how hard you try and how many times you call him by name, nothing can finally be explained.

Yet the rebbe, Motele Bratslavskii, the Red Army man's father, is one of Babel's own, albeit no "brother." The dialogue between him and Liutov, in the story "The Rebbe," is a conversation between people who understand each other intuitively. Joy, laughter, merriment are what Liutov craves as he wanders voluntarily through the convulsions and carnage of the class war, and the rebbe seeks the same with his pupils, as does the rag-and-bone man Gedali—which is why Gedali's praise of Hasidism has the ring of the author's own judgment. By contrast, the argument with Gedali (in "Gedali"), the champion of the "sweet Revolution" and the "International of good people," rings hollow. Liutov answers the ragman's "abstract humanism" with only two arguments, quite summarily presented: the Revolution "cannot help shooting, because it is the Revolution," and the International "is eaten with gunpowder and seasoned with the finest blood." In fact, these are something less than arguments. The principal refutation of Liutov's position, however, lies elsewhere: immediately after his menacing reference to gunpowder and blood comes the plaintive request, quoted above, for some Jewish biscuits and a glass of Jewish tea. "There isn't any," Gedali replies: "There isn't any. There's a tavern next door, where good people used to do business. But people don't eat there anymore, they just weep there."

Liutov has nowhere to go. The old world, from which he fled but which still retains its hold on him, has been destroyed by the new, toward which he is striving with all his heart, but which will not accept him, and repels him with its ugliness and bloodlust. The loneliness and desperation of the intellectual in the Revolution—a frequent enough literary theme in the 1920's—are compounded by the loneliness of the Jew; the Jew, moreover, being of a particular kind, split down the middle in his attitude to Jewishness, as the intellectual is split in his attitude to the Revolution. As a result, in the strength and tension of the tragic principle, the insolubility of its conflict, *Red Cavalry* may well take pride of place among books on the civil war.

The sharpness of the conflict is intensified by a vision so unsparing in its precision as to suggest at times the moral indifference of an aesthete:

> Right in front of my windows, some Cossacks were executing an old silver-bearded Jew for spying. The old man yelped and struggled. Then Kudrya, from the machine-gunners, tucked the old man's head under his arm. The Jew fell silent and spread his feet apart. With his right hand, Kudrya took out his knife and carefully cut the old man's throat, avoiding the spurting blood. ("Berestechko")

But this precision is itself the result of a sense of apartness and alienation that often borders on active hostility. (Simple compassion for "one's own," whether in ethnic kinship or common cause, would have blurred the vision and robbed the picture of its distinctive severity.) In the same story, "Berestechko," the Jewish way of life is delineated with a hostility that marks even the vocabulary ("the warm putrefaction of the old world," "the stifling decay of Hasidism," "the traditional wretchedness of this architecture," and so on); and this hostility is underlined by contrast: "The village stinks, waiting for the new era, and instead of people, it is inhabited by fading schemata of frontier misfortunes. By the end of the day I was fed up with them and I left the town, climbed the hill, and found an entry into the ruins of the Raciborski castle." Liutov is not shocked by the abomination of desolation in what was once the seat of a Polish aristocrat; his descriptive detail—the nymphs with their eyes put out, a fragment of a hundred-year old letter—sounds, rather, elegiac.

But even sharper and more merciless is the vision he turns on his comrades-in-arms. Here the alienation of an intellectual is augmented by ethnic alienation—and Liutov recoils in horror. He wants to admire and approve, and from this willed desire derive both the romantic phantasmagoria of landscapes and the infatuated portraits of his heroes, such as that of Savitskii, the divisional commander, in the opening paragraph of "My First Goose." But the romantic, technicolor film often snaps, and then one sees in the gaps the "raw fingers" and "fleshy, loathsome face" of another hero, another divisional commander, Pavlichenko in "Chesniki." The horror is even clearer in the stories told by narrators other than Liutov; between them and him lies an abyss of non-understanding and fear. With fear and bewilderment the intellectual Liutov registers the dense and savage suspiciousness of the barbarian ("Betrayal"); but for Liutov the Jew, much more terrible is the fanatical savagery of the "*goyim*," trampling the enemy to death ("The Life Story of Pavlichenko"), ready to kill for a bag of salt ("Salt"),

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capable of parricide and the murder of a son ("The Letter"). It would be wrong to see Liutov's reaction to all this as reflecting only a sense of moral superiority, millennia of living with the biblical commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," for it reflects as well millennia of passive martyrdom, the heritage of discrimination and intimidation.

On the whole, as I have already remarked, the author of *Red Cavalry* stands above his hero. His dual position is stable and productive. Despite his apartness, he is still his own man in both elements, in the old and in the new, in the Jewish and in the Soviet. He is not with the Liutov who is fed up with the Jews of Berestechko, or who confesses, "I am tired of living in this Red Army of ours" ("Evening"). He corrects Liutov through Gedali; and he cuts short Liutov's complaining with Galin's words: "You're a ditherer, and it's our luck that we have to put up with ditherers like you. . . . We are taking the nut out of the shell for you. Soon you'll see the nut right out of its shell, then you'll stop picking your nose and start singing the praises of the new life in unusual prose. Till then, just sit quiet, you ditherer, and don't whine around our feet" ("Evening").

This astonishing harmony-in-duality is what makes *Red Cavalry* a unique book, in Soviet as well as Russian-Jewish literature. It is Babel's best work, also his most Jewish—despite its non-Jewish subject matter—because at its center stands Jewish restlessness and yearning, gripped momentarily by the prospect of finding self-transcendence in the great common cause. That this hope was unrealizable, that the cause, "seasoned with the finest blood," would turn into an endless bloodbath, Babel did not know, and to indict him on this ground would be wrong.

Babel's works on purely Jewish subjects turn out, in a sense, to be less Jewish, precisely because in them the confidently sustained duality of position is weaker by comparison with *Red Cavalry*—when it is not, as in the early story "Shabbes Nakhamu" (1918), entirely absent. The latter is a rather pallid rendering of several anecdotes, or oral tales, about Hershele Ostropolier, the Jewish variation of the trickster-hero to be found in the folklore of almost every people. Babel, however, evidently gave this experiment (which, despite its subtitle, "From the Cycle, 'Hershele,'" he never continued) special significance, for in *Red Cavalry*, in reply to Reb Motele's question, "What does the Jew do?," Liutov replies, "I am rendering the adventures of Hersh of Ostropol into verse."

THE *Odessa Tales* were probably written at the same time as *Red Cavalry*. They are marked, however, not only by different themes: the narrator is different, as is his relation to his material. Babel writes of the gangster life of Jewish Odessa in the first person, but at one point allows the narrative to pass to the synagogue beadle (*shames*), Arye-Leib, who refers to the narrator in rather disparaging terms: "You have spectacles on your nose, and autumn in your soul." Nevertheless, the poetics and intonation, as well as the emotional background of all four tales, are identical. The narrator is as much in love with the fat, juicy, fleshy, full-blooded, expansive Odessa of robbers, rich men, and cemetery-gate beggars, as is Arye-Leib himself. Arye-Leib says of the rich man nicknamed "Jew-and-a-half": "Tartakovskii's got the soul of a murderer, but he's one of us. He started as one of us. He's our flesh and blood, just as if the same mother bore us" ("How Things Were Done in Odessa"). *Mutatis mutandis*, Babel might have said the same thing about all of old Jewish Odessa—as old Odessa might about him. He is here at home among his own; of the urge to escape and the self-division, all that remains is the conventional pair of spectacles on the nose, contrasting with the eagle eyes of the horse-and-cart drivers, the thieves, and Tartakovskii.

None of this is intended to diminish the qualities of the *Odessa Tales*. I merely mean to emphasize one thing: despite their stunning stylistic discoveries and innovations, despite their nostalgia for a recent but already irrevocable past, despite the utterly new and unexpected appearance of a bandit-hero in Russian-Jewish literature, the *Odessa Tales* continue and perhaps crown the pre-revolutionary tradition of social observation in this literature, whereas *Red Cavalry* opens a new period and establishes a new tradition.

The four stories of the autobiographical cycle were written later than *Red Cavalry* and *Odessa Tales*. Two of them are dated 1925 and two 1930. These sad Jewish tales of sad Jewish childhood, with pogroms, penury, insane relatives—as I mentioned above, at least half of the events and details are imaginary—would not stand out among the childhood reminiscences in which Russian-Jewish literature abounds but for the fact that here the author regards his past from a different, completely non-Jewish world. He has not broken with his former world demonstratively or noisily; he has simply left it, slipped away from it, into "nowhere," and he looks back with mixed feelings of nostalgia and fear, like the majority of children who have turned adult. Jewishness here is not the theme but the background against which the tragedies of childhood are reenacted: tragedies of love, deception, humiliation. Naturally, they are all strongly conditioned by the background, especially as, in the first two short stories, "The Story of My Dovecote" and "First Love," the background is a pogrom, but the tragedies themselves are universal, not linked to any one place or time or people. And the heart of each tale lies precisely in these universal tragedies; perhaps that is why the narrator, in focusing on his past sufferings, renders them with Babel-like tension and insight, observ-

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ing everything else—the pogrom itself, his murdered grandfather Shoil, the Cossacks and their horses, the pogromists themselves—with a gaze that is clear, calm, and at times even admiring. This contrast represents not merely the special strength of Babel's autobiographical stories, but also an innovation of the greatest significance for the modern Jewish literatures of the Diaspora.

BABEL'S first play, *Sunset*, fulfills a singular role in his fate as a writer. Written in 1926, revised and finished in 1927, it was first produced and published in 1928, on the eve of the "great breaking point." The general atmosphere of the play, as well as the characters and even the plot, had all been anticipated in the *Odessa Tales*. But the change of literary genre—from narrative to dramatic—in and of itself brings drastic alterations in the message. Gone is the narrator in love with his material, and what had the air of a story told with relish about big-city sharpers now takes on the oppressive seriousness of life and becomes tragedy. It may suffice to recall the embryonic plot of *Sunset* as we find it in the tale, "The Father":

> Lamps were already burning in the wine-cellar and music was playing. Old Jews with heavy beards were playing Rumanian and Jewish songs. Mendel Krik was at a table, drinking wine from a green glass and recounting how his own sons, Benya and Levka, had beaten him up. He bawled out his tale in a hoarse and dreadful voice, he showed where his teeth had been knocked out, and he let them feel the wounds on his belly. Porcelain-faced *tsaddikim* from Volhynia stood behind his chair and listened dumbfounded to Mendel Krik's bragging. They were amazed at everything they heard, and Grach despised them for it. "Old braggart," he mumbled about Mendel, and ordered himself some wine.

Jewish themes must not be considered the indisputable monopoly of Jewish literature. So, here, it is not so much Babel's thorough knowledge of and feeling for the milieu that makes this play about the age-old tragedy of generational conflict the peak of Russian-Jewish drama as it is the fundamentally Jewish angle of vision, the presence of a Jewish wisdom two millennia old. Events are summed up by the old man, Ben Zekharia, "the rabbi of the Moldavanka," clown and jester, "crook and wise man":

> Day is day, and evening is evening, Jews. Day drowns us in the sweat of our labor, but evening is waiting to fan us with its heavenly breezes. The prophet Joshua, who stopped the sun, was a wicked madman. And here is Mendel Krik, a member of our synagogue, who turns out to be no smarter than Joshua. All his life he's wanted to broil himself in the blazing sun, all his life he's wanted to stand on the spot where noonday found him. But God has policemen on every street, and Mendel Krik had sons in his house. Policemen come and put things in order. Day is day and evening is evening. Everything is in order, Jews. Let's have a glass of vodka!

What are these beautiful and menacing allegories, "stealing from afar toward a goal not everyone can see," as Babel himself might have said ("The End of the Old Folks' Home")? What is this lofty and heartrending acceptance of the inevitable, if not a variation on the eternal bitterness and wisdom of Ecclesiastes? "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted. . . ." Everything is in order because "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever," and Arye-Leib's lamentations over Mendel's "lacerated and powdered" face are authentic catharsis in the classical Aristotelian sense. And when he "laughs and cries," wiping away his tears with the handkerchief which Mendel offers him, we are witnessing not hysterics, but catharsis, the recovery of emotional balance and good spirits through the contemplation of another's suffering. Everything is in order, life goes on.

Still, the play is not called *Sunset* for nothing. It is about what is passing away, not what is to come; it is about destruction and death. The commodious symbol of sunset refers to much more than the collapse of past greatness and the outdated expectations of the horse-and-cart driver Mendel Krik, to more even than the decline of old Odessa. It is the entire old order that is collapsing, its very foundations crumbling into dust. However dubious Mendel Krik may seem in the role of patriarch, he is nevertheless the father, and we know what the father means in Jewish tradition, and especially for Babel. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long." "Whosoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death." "You shall rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of an old man." Yet here the face of the old father has been beaten and lacerated by the leaden fists of his sons.

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down." What this rising sun would be and what sort of world it would illuminate, Babel did not know as he worked on *Sunset*. It would be straining interpretation to assert that he was lamenting with Arye-Leib the decline of the old Jewish tradition, however bound to it he was emotionally and even, as it were, umbilically; it would be still less defensible to see in the gangsters Benya and Levka a caricatured allegory of the new, revolutionary order of things. But there is no blinking the way grief and anxiety in *Sunset* predominate over the "bubbling joviality" (the phrase is from "Discourse on the Tachanka") of the *Odessa Tales*.

Sunset proved the beginning of Babel's own

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sunset. The "great breaking point" broke his backbone, too. There would still be some flights—and high ones; but there would no longer be any confident or consistent ascent. Among the chief reasons was the departure of the Jews from the Russian scene—not Mendel Krik, but the whole of that Jewry which was Babel's own. Assimilation was proceeding at breakneck speed. To the new forms of Jewish life permitted and encouraged by the authorities at the end of the 1920's and beginning of the 1930's, Babel apparently remained indifferent. As far as I am aware, he made no comment whatever on the Jewish "province" of Birobidzhan. In 1931, the Society for the Agricultural Settlement of Jewish Workers wanted to show him the new Jewish agricultural settlements in the Ukraine. He mentions this briefly in his letters, without any interest, and fails even to say whether or not he took up the invitation. He was not really interested or involved in Yiddish culture, despite his love of Sholem Aleichem, his connection with the Yiddish theater and friendship with the actor Solomon Mikhoels, and his good relations with certain Yiddish writers. The Russian-Jewish writer had had the ground cut out from under his feet.

The ascents of his last decade are, in the main, connected with the Jewish theme or with the narrator Liutov's manner of perception in *Red Cavalry:* the last two stories of the autobiographical cycle (1930), and the superb "The Road" (1932) are pure Liutov. Liutov's spirit also permeates Babel's masterpiece, "Guy de Maupassant"—published in 1932, but, according to the author, dating from 1920-22. I am inclined to assign another remarkable story, "Dante Street" (1934), to this category, for its emotional key—the most important component of the story—is desperate loneliness: "There is no loneliness more desperate than loneliness in Paris." As for the *Odessa Tales,* their manner extends to "The End of the Old Folks' Home" (author's date 1920-29, published 1932 with the subtitle "From the Odessa Tales") and "Froim Grach" (submitted for publication 1933, published posthumously). One can hardly call the latter an "ascent," but the two stories are linked (and detached from the *Odessa Tales*) by the motif of departure, death, and regret for what is gone which is particularly sharp in "Froim Grach."

In 1935, Babel announced: "I would like to tell the world everything I know about old Odessa; after that I will be able to go on to the new Odessa." In fact he had undertaken to confront the new Odessa earlier, in 1931, when he published his story, "Karl Yankel." But the attempt was not a success—as Babel himself realized. In a letter written in February 1932, he expresses astonishment that the critics should pay any attention to such rubbish, and he calls the story simply bad. He cannot handle the new Odessa because he has no tender feeling for it. The scandal about the circumcision of the newborn Karl Yankel in the story of that name is inflated not merely in itself, but it is inflated and artificial for Babel, who is forcing himself and cannot disguise the fact. The same element of artificiality appears in the stereotype, Ovsei Belotserkovskii, who stockpiles farm supplies with the help of the Balta and Tiraspol district party committees. It appears in the feeding of the infant by the Kirghiz woman—a sugary vignette illustrative of the "indestructible friendship of the peoples of the USSR"—and in the pathos of the narrator's concluding exclamations. On the other hand, there is nothing false, despite some crude grotesque, in the "little operator" Naftula Gerchik; the page and a half devoted to him are Babel at his best.

Throughout the 1930's, Babel was searching for a new style. Both his letters and his public speeches are full of complaints about the agonizing difficulties of the search. He was looking not only for new expressive forms but, above all, for another atmosphere, another milieu, new ground under his feet. Beyond the bounds of Russian-Jewish literature, however, success would not favor him—even though he knew the Soviet Union very well, loved it devotedly, was himself loved and surrounded everywhere by friends. As I have said, the reasons for this are various and each has its own measure of validity; still, it would appear that the loss of his dual position, his dual vision, had a crucial effect. It is not in evidence—nor could it be—when he is regarding something entirely alien, as, for example, the high aristocracy (in the play *Mariia*), even if by the accident of revolution a Jewish speculator has managed to worm his way into its midst. Gorky, incidentally—who justifiably disliked *Mariia*—wrote to Babel: "I especially don't like Dymshits. . . . You make him too easy a target for the Judeophobes." I imagine such apprehensions had never occurred to Babel. The Jewish writer portrays a Jewish villain as naturally and unselfconsciously as a Russian writer would a Russian villain, and neither would worry about what the Judeophobes or the Russophobes might say. Even so, there is no dual vision when one examines a thing of one's own making: in the two surviving fragments of a lost novel about collectivization ("Kolyvushka" and "Gapa Guzhva"), Babel is truthful, that is, true to himself—but he is unable to detach himself from the material, to stand to one side, and the sharpness, clarity, and depth of his account suffer in consequence.

BABEL is the most important figure in Russian-Jewish literature of the Soviet period, the model of the Jewish writer in Soviet-Russian culture. The Russian-Jewish literature that was reborn after Stalin takes its bearings from him, and is measured against him. To im-

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itate Babel is impossibly difficult, to repeat him impossible—just as his fate is unrepeatable, just as old Odessa and turn-of-the-century Russian Jewry are beyond recall. But one can compare, assess, learn. It is unlikely that anyone today will be tempted by Babel's second standpoint, the Russian Revolution. But his feelings and views suggest the possibility of another much more attractive "bifurcation." I have in mind some such oppositions as these: insularity, rigidity, inhibition, hypertrophied rationalism—as against openness, emotional release, fullness of feeling, the joy of existence. That is what the dialogue in the bedroom of the old Kriks in *Sunset* is all about. Nekhama nags her husband: "Look how other people live. For supper, other people have ten pounds of meat, they make soup, they make cutlets, they make compote. The father comes home from work, everybody sits at the table, everybody eats and laughs. But what do *we* do?" And Mendel snarls back: "Pull out my teeth, Nekhama, pour some Yiddish soup into my veins, break my back. . . ." Here is the root of Babel's ill-concealed delight in his gangsters, in the violent, dangerous crank Simon-Wolf, in grandfather Levi Yitzhok, the ex-rabbi who lost his post for crooked dealing in currency, "the laughing-stock of the town, and its embellishment" ("In the Basement," "Awakening"). Here also is the sense of the ending of "The Story of a Horse," a remarkable paragraph which has been endlessly quoted: "Khlebnikov was a quiet man, like me in character. We were both rocked by the same passions. We both looked on the world as a meadow in May, a meadow where women and horses moved about."

Not to reject tradition, not to turn away from one's own history, not to wallow either in the fruits of the Diaspora or in its rubbish, but instead, to leap into freedom, into open space, to burst free from one's chains, to know the taste, color, scent, texture of everything denied us by the ghetto wall, the Pale of Settlement, and that invisible pale which we put around ourselves and in which we suffocated for century upon century. And to find harmony in dichotomy.

This is not written in Babel's work, it is only implied. But the idea of this paradoxical harmony, which is not at all the same thing as peace and quiet and heavenly grace, comes to mind constantly when one looks at the old guard of the kibbutzim, the settlers of Palestine in the 1930's. It comes to mind with increasing frequency as one thinks of the Jews of Silence, who have now become the Jews of courage.

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Why Spinoza Was Excommunicated

Yirmiahu Yovel

ON JULY 27, 1656 a sentence of excommunication was pronounced on a twenty-four-year-old Jew of the Portuguese community of Amsterdam and recorded in the communal record book as follows:

> The members of the *ma'amad* [i.e., the elders or *parnasim* of the council] make known to you that having long known of the evil opinions and acts of Baruch d'Espinoza, they have endeavored by various means and promises to turn him from evil ways. Not being able to find any remedy, but on the contrary receiving every day more information about the abominable heresies practiced and taught [to others] by him, and about the monstrous acts committed by him, having this from many reliable witnesses who have deposed and borne witness on all this in the presence of said Spinoza . . .; all this having been examined in the presence of the wise gentlemen [i.e., the rabbis], they have decided, with the consent of the latter, that the said Espinoza be excommunicated and banished from the people of Israel, and they accordingly excommunicate him as follows:
>
> By the decrees of the Angels and the proclamation of the Saints, we hereby excommunicate, ban, and anathematize Baruch d'Espinoza, with the agreement of the Blessed Lord and his Holy Congregation. . . . May he be cursed in the day and cursed in the night, cursed in his lying down and cursed in his rising up. Cursed in his going forth and cursed in his coming in; and may the Lord not forgive him, and may His wrath and jealousy destroy him utterly, and may the Lord blot out his name from under the sky and separate him from all the tribes of Israel with all the curses of Heaven that are contained in this book of the Law. But you who cleave to the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.
>
> And we hereby warn you that none may communicate with him by word of mouth or writing, nor show him any charity whatsoever, nor stay with him under one roof, nor come into his company, nor read any composition made or written by him.

The object of this excommunication, Baruch d'Espinoza, belonged to the upper crust of the Jewish community. His father, Michael, was a highly respected merchant active in civic affairs who had served several times as a *parnas* (elder), an extremely powerful office in Amsterdam. The young Baruch (Bento) received a traditional Jewish education, studying Hebrew and Scripture, Talmud and Jewish philosophy, and also read independently on secular subjects (including works in Hebrew on mathematics, physics, and astronomy), preparing himself for a life in commerce. At the age of six he had lost his mother, Hana Devora, and from then on death visited the family frequently, taking his younger brother, Yitzhak, his sister, Miriam, his stepmother, Esther, and finally his father.

Spinoza was twenty-two when his father died. Together with his brother, Gabriel, he founded a commercial company, "Bento et Gabriel d'Espinoza," for the import and export of fruit. The venture was only moderately successful, and on one occasion the brothers suffered losses due to a shipwreck. During this period, Spinoza continued to attend the Keter Torah yeshivah headed by Rabbi Shaul Levi Mortera, and apparently also kept up his connection with his former teacher, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, whose home was a kind of center for scholars and educated Jews passing through Amsterdam. On the surface, at least, no change was as yet perceptible in Spinoza's relations with the Jewish community; for more than a year after his father's death he continued to be on good terms with the synagogue authorities, was scrupulous in the payment of his dues and the honoring of his pledges, and was not involved in any open conflicts with authority.

Nevertheless, he was apparently full of doubts and heretical thoughts. He knew the Bible by heart and found many contradictions in it. The notion of miracles, for example, seemed to him to contradict both reason and the laws of nature, and in the prophets he found evidence of great imaginative power but not of ordered rational thought. The ordinances of the Torah and the halakhah seemed to him arbitrary and merely historical, having nothing to do with the laws of God: if God did indeed have laws, they could only be inherent in the universe itself in the form of the universal

YIRMIAHU YOVEL, a new contributor, is director of the S.H. Bergman Center for Philosophical Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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and immutable laws of nature. Moreover, in view of the death which awaits us all (and which Spinoza himself had already encountered from the years of his early childhood on), there was no comfort in the vain idea of a life to come. Death was the absolute end of every living creature, of both body and soul; if there was any value or purpose in life, it had to be found in this world—in a life of inquiry and understanding and in the intellectual freedom of the individual.* Spinoza still clung to the idea of the eternal, the infinite, the perfect—in other words, the idea of God—but this deity was not in his view a unique and separate *persona* existing outside the world and the nature he had created. God, the object of our love, was, rather, the universe itself, insofar as it could be grasped as a single whole. Nature and God were one, and the knowledge of nature was therefore the knowledge of God.

We do not know when these ideas matured in the mind of the heterodox youth, but the process apparently began at a rather early stage. About four years after his excommunication, the first part of Spinoza's most important work, the *Ethics,* containing the essence of his pantheism, already existed in manuscript form. With these ideas Spinoza excluded himself from both Judaism and Christianity, and even from the accepted philosophical tradition; he was a heretic not only from the point of view of the established religions, but also from the point of view of the free thinkers, and the several varieties of philosophic deism they were espousing at the time. Deism rejects religion in the name of an external and remote "philosophic" deity which does not intervene in the affairs of this world and does not possess the attributes of particular providence, punishment, and reward, or commandment and ritual. But the deistic heretics at least acknowledged the existence of a transcendent deity elevated above the world, whereas Spinoza dismissed this idea and identified God with the whole of the universe. In short, Spinoza proclaimed himself a heretic not only among the faithful, but also among representatives of the accepted heresy of his period, thus cutting himself loose from all the main spiritual currents of his time.

In its mature form, Spinoza's system is one of the most important in the history of philosophy. Although he had few actual disciples, it has simply not been possible, ever since the republication of his works, to participate in the enterprise of philosophy without taking his world view into account. In the words of Henri Bergson: "Every philosopher has two philosophies: his own and Spinoza's." It is no coincidence that minds as opposed as Hegel's and Nietzsche's, for example, both saw Spinoza as their great forerunner: his doctrine is more complex and many-faceted than it might at first appear.

But Spinoza's ethics and metaphysics—the essence of his teaching—were not his first achievements. They were preceded by a profound critique of religion and a vigorous attack on its sacred texts—first and foremost the Bible. When he wrote this critique, the young Spinoza, who did not know Latin, had not yet read the new scientific and philosophical works which would change the face of the age. He had not come into contact with the students of Descartes and the scholars of the Royal Society of London, and was not acquainted with Hobbes, Machiavelli, or Galileo. He developed his reflections and criticisms of religion solely from within the world of contemporary Judaism—a world far more complex and various than we tend to imagine today.

The Jews of Amsterdam in Spinoza's time have been described both in literary works and by historians (mainly those following Graetz) as a narrow-minded and fanatical lot who deliberately shut themselves off from any spark of illumination or enlightenment from the outside world. This picture is inaccurate. The truth of the matter is that the Amsterdam community was one of the most enlightened and cosmopolitan Jewish communities of the period. The people who inhabited Amsterdam's Jewish Street—which was worlds apart from the closed ghettos of Eastern Europe—were former Marranos or sons of Marranos, most of them prosperous businessmen living in relative freedom within a tolerant state. Engaged mainly in import and export and other forms of international commerce, they were accustomed to mingling with Gentiles, and were rather openminded and receptive, having been educated in the schools of Spain and Portugal, or later on in the flourishing educational system developed by the community itself. At the same time, their experience as former Marranos was a never-ending source of perplexity and self-questioning to them, an experience which led to numerous difficulties of adjustment and deep-seated problems of identity. It is against this background of the experience of the former Marranos that we must understand both Spinoza's heresy and the excommunication which was its result.

Some, like Richard Popkin in his study of the subject, have seen in the Marranos the "beginning of modernization in Europe." But even without going so far, it is clear that a man who had been educated as a Christian and who then chose to return to Judaism could not belong entirely or simply to either faith. He would of necessity be faced with enormous difficulties in reintegrating himself into the community to which he indeed belonged, but whose daily life and whose deepest values and symbols were not actually part of his experience. This is not the place to discuss the variety of nuances to which the Marrano experience gave rise

* Spinoza does speak in the *Ethics* of a kind of immortality of the soul, but not in any individual sense; the individual perishes and what remains is a kind of "eternal truth."

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in those who returned to Judaism as adults (or, for that matter, among those who became Christians), though interesting research on this subject is currently under way. But it is not hard to understand how a man who is not simply either a Christian or a Jew but who is divided between the two, or who possesses memories of the one existing within the other, might be inclined to develop doubts about both, or even to question the foundations of religion altogether. As Yosef Yerushalmi has argued,* the wonder is not that the return of the Marranos to Judaism gave rise to doubts and heresies, but rather that the majority should have succeeded as far as they did in reintegrating themselves into the framework of normative Judaism. In any case, Spinoza did not lack for predecessors in his heresy among the Marranos—this dough of the "new Jews" seems to have contained a leavening agent which gave rise to a constant intellectual ferment from within.

For rejecting the oral law and the rabbinical canons of Judaism and for denying the immortality of the soul, Uriel da Costa had twice been excommunicated. Twice he had recanted, only to commit suicide in the end, after many harassments and humiliations, by shooting himself. Indeed, Bento d'Espinoza, who was only eight years old when da Costa killed himself, may very well have been among the little boys whose persecutions da Costa complained of during his ordeal. Whether or not he was, by the time Spinoza grew up and began to think for himself, both the fate and the views of Uriel da Costa must have provided him with food for thought, just as he must certainly have been aware of the less spectacular cases of nonconformity which were then troubling the community. It is commonly claimed that Spinoza's critique of religion was influenced above all by his reading of Jewish philosophy. But why should the boy have pored over ancient Jewish texts and extracted from them elements which might have sounded heretical out of context (although in context they were still within the framework of legitimate Judaism) unless there was some incentive for him to do so in his external environment? There is no doubt that Spinoza's apostasy contained an element of spontaneous awakening—that spiritual breakthrough of a single genius which cannot be fully explained by a set of foregoing events. Yet this breakthrough did not occur in the void but within a specific social and cultural milieu, which must be taken into account if we are to understand the phenomenon of Spinoza at all.

THE CURIOUS fact that, until a mere six months before his excommunication, Spinoza continued to conform externally to the norms of Jewish life in his community, may be explained by his own rules of caution, which state that "we must speak to the multitude in the language it understands" and "conform to the customs of the land which are not opposed to our aims." Although he was one of the most independent thinkers of his generation and displayed an extreme and extraordinary boldness in his intellectual attitudes, Spinoza was not interested in making a public show of his opinions or boasting of his intellectual independence. On the contrary, a combination of spiritual elitism and personal caution (both of which he inherited from Maimonides, among others) led him to speak in disguised language and to confine his activities to a small circle of trusted friends and acquaintances. (Even in his most provocative book, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,* Spinoza continued to disguise his true opinions and to speak in the "language of the multitude.") The ring he wore on his finger—this freest and boldest spirit of his generation—was engraved with the warning *"caute"* (be careful), and to this combination of daring and caution Spinoza remained true all his life. How then can we account for the fact that one day in the autumn of 1655 he suddenly began making his opinions public and became so disruptive a presence in the synagogue that, after several warnings, he was finally excommunicated and anathematized?

Two conjectures are possible here, and they are mutually compatible. Spinoza's first biographer, Jean M. Lucas, claims that the break with the Jewish community was a product of Spinoza's own wishes; at a certain stage, according to Lucas, Spinoza discovered that his pretended conformity with the "customs of the land" was beginning to conflict with his spiritual goals, and so he discontinued it. Other sources point to the influence of Juan de Prado, an Andalusian doctor who had been active for many years in the Marrano underground in Spain. By leading an underground life, Prado had succeeded in escaping the clutches of the Inquisition, only to fall prey, in the very midst of his activities as a secret Jew, to profound theological doubts. By the time he finally escaped to Amsterdam (less than a year before Spinoza's excommunication), these doubts had become articulate—he began to express his deistic opinions publicly, to mock the rabbis, and to transgress openly against the commandments of Judaism. Prado was an educated man who had studied science and philosophy, but he was also vain and arrogant, and could not resist the temptation to boast of his scholarship and enlightened views. He was about twelve years older than Spinoza, and it is reasonable to suppose that when he arrived in Amsterdam the young Baruch found in him a man with whom he could discuss his own doubts. Along with Prado, an even more famous heretic appeared in Amsterdam at this time—the Calvinist theologian, Isaac La Peyrère, who was one of the first Bible critics.

It is possible that meeting these two men accelerated processes in Spinoza which were already well under way. If nothing else, these meetings

* *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto,* 1971.

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must have helped to put an end to Spinoza's isolation—the isolation of a young man who had no one with whom he could share his doubts—and must have encouraged him to be more explicit both with himself and with others. More specifically, it is possible that these contacts helped Spinoza make up his mind to declare his independence and detach himself from the daily rituals of Judaism, even at the possible cost of cutting himself off from the community.

Once Spinoza had reached this decision, nothing could stop him. He ceased attending services at the synagogue, broke the commandments of the Torah, and began to reveal his doubts to those of his acquaintances he felt he could trust. He still did not perpetrate these deeds in public but he did, at least, put an end to his former pretense. The heads of the community did what they could to dissuade him, and there is even a conjecture that among the "various means and promises" they employed (as itemized in the writ of excommunication) was an attempt to bribe him to take part in synagogue services. Similar pressure was put on Prado, since the scandal involved them both, but the reactions of the two friends were very different. Prado preferred to continue the double life he had become accustomed to in the Marrano underground in Spain and fought doggedly to remain within the Jewish community. Spinoza, however, stood up openly for his ideas, composed a detailed defense of his actions which has unfortunately not survived (although the main points seem to be included in the *Tractatus*), and resigned himself to excommunication and isolation.

DRASTIC though it sounds to modern ears, excommunication was a fairly common sanction in the Amsterdam Jewish community. Although only the most prominent cases have come down to us, one contemporary Canadian scholar has estimated that there were as many as *two hundred* cases in Amsterdam, including that of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel himself who was excommunicated—though only for a day—for alleged implication in some affair involving taxes and the misuse of propaganda materials. Grounds for excommunication, as laid down in the community regulations, were not confined to heresy and blasphemy, but also included such seemingly minor transgressions as speaking too loudly or carrying weapons in the synagogue, disseminating libelous literature, organizing a private *minyan*, representing the Jewish community without the permission of the *parnasim*, and associating with people who had refused to pay taxes—all of which indicates that excommunication was primarily an internal sanction used by the community as a way of maintaining authority over its members.

Those empowered to pronounce the sentence of excommunication, moreover, were not the rabbis but the "civil" authorities. These were represented by the council known as the *ma'amad* which was made up of six *parnasim* or elders, and a *gabbai* or treasurer. The *ma'amad,* which enjoyed both executive and judicial powers, was accountable to no one, and was not even elected by the community, its members having been appointed by their predecessors. Among the functions of the *parnasim* were those usually associated with rabbis or religious officials, such as supervision over ritual slaughtering practices. But they also had authority to impose excommunication, though it was carried out in consultation with the rabbis and with their consent.

Many hypotheses have been put forward to explain Spinoza's excommunication. One school argues that the reasons were political, and stemmed from the community's relations with the outside world rather than its own internal needs. Those who hold this view base their case chiefly on a document known as the "Remonstrance" which regulated the legal status of the Jews in the Dutch republic. Adopted in 1619, this document states that the presence of "atheists and godless men" will not be tolerated in the Jewish population; that such individuals are to be "properly isolated from the others and punished without mercy," and that all Jews fourteen years of age and older are required to declare to the civil authorities their belief in God, Moses, and the prophets, and in the existence of life after death. Furthermore, any person disseminating ideas contrary to these would be liable to "the death penalty, or corporal punishment, in accordance with the gravity of the crime." While there is no reason to suppose that these harsh penalties were ever actually imposed, it is nevertheless clear—in the opinion of those who hold this view, at least—that the Amsterdam community would in the circumstances have been apprehensive about its status in the Dutch republic, and would have done anything possible to prevent manifestations of atheism among its members.

Plausible though it sounds, this hypothesis has its weaknesses. It is true that in 1619, at the time of the Remonstrance, the Jewish community was still in its infancy and fighting to secure its position in the Dutch republic. It is also true that at the time of the Remonstrance, Calvinist orthodoxy was at the height of its powers, calling for the subjection of the state to the laws of religion and persecuting its opponents within the Christian faith. But Spinoza's excommunication took place about forty years after the Remonstrance and in completely new and different circumstances. Calvinist orthodoxy was in retreat by this time, and the Republican party, much more tolerant in its views, was in power. Indeed, no more than about six months after Spinoza's excommunication, the Netherlands States-General approved a resolution stating that theology and philosophy were two separate subjects which were not to be confused with

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each other, thereby providing a basic legal safeguard for the freedom of philosophical inquiry. Moreover, Jan de Witt, the strong man of the republic (later to become Spinoza's friend), was himself an ardent defender of the freedom of philosophical inquiry at the universities. It is thus difficult to imagine that the excommunication took place simply in the name of the ancient Remonstrance, which had never been literally enforced anyway, and had by now lost much of its force as a statement of principle as well. Indeed, there is room to suppose that Spinoza's excommunication was if anything opposed to the official religious policy just then taking shape within the circles in power in the Netherlands. At the same time, however, it is also possible that the Jewish leadership became conscious of this political change only gradually, so the question must remain open.

This being the case, some scholars have argued that the political reason for Spinoza's excommunication had nothing to do with the position of the Jews in Holland, but hinged rather on the possibility of their return to England.* On the very day of the excommunication, Spinoza's former teacher Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel was in London, where he was attempting to persuade Oliver Cromwell to allow Jews to resettle in England. Scholars have argued, accordingly, that Spinoza's excommunication was a means of facilitating this scheme. To mollify opponents of Jewish resettlement and dispose of their fears that the Jews might bring heretical ideas and religious apostasy to Puritan England, it was necessary to nip any manifestations of apostasy in Amsterdam in the bud. This is an intriguing theory, but there is no evidence to support it. In the first place, Rabbi Menasseh was not that influential in Amsterdam; in the second place, the notion of the return of the Jews to England was probably Menasseh's own personal (and essentially messianic) idea rather than the official policy of the Amsterdam Jewish community.

Interestingly enough, there is yet another variant of the "political" explanation of Spinoza's excommunication and one which has a peculiarly contemporary ring. This is the argument that blame for the excommunication rests not on the Jewish community of Amsterdam, but rather on the burgomasters of the city, who had intimated to the *parnasim* that Spinoza should be excommunicated. This theory, however, completely distorts the contemporary significance of the excommunication and prevents us from seeing its inner justification—as well as the drama embodied in the whole affair.

EVEN if the decision to excommunicate Spinoza was influenced by external political considerations, this should not blind us to the fact that the inner life of the Amsterdam community and its unique situation provide sufficient reason for the excommunication. The need to rid itself of Spinoza (as also of da Costa and Prado) stemmed primarily from the requirements of the community's survival and the difficult task of creating a shelter for the refugees fleeing the Inquisition. The rabbis and elders of the Amsterdam community were faced with a historic responsibility: that of reintroducing the "new Jews" into the religious traditions of Judaism, and of renewing a process of historic continuity that had been cruelly disrupted. There is no need to point out that this was a far from simple task, in some respects, indeed, an impossible one: organic continuity could not simply be mandated, nor could the Christian-Marrano past of the "new Jews" be effaced and replaced by a simple, uncomplicated Jewish identity. We have already seen that Spinoza's apostasy stemmed in part from this problem, but so did the deep inner necessity for his excommunication.

Because the Amsterdam community was engaged in a daily and hourly struggle to reintegrate the Marranos into Judaism, the issue of unity was necessarily more crucial than any other. The problem faced by the Amsterdam rabbis, and by the community's teachers and publicists, was not only to translate Jewish culture into the idiom of the Iberian peninsula, but, even more important, to restore the daily pattern of Jewish life in accordance with the ancient customs of Israel. In the light of this necessity, acts like Spinoza's, which challenged tradition in the name of freedom of thought and sabotaged the endeavor to repair the torn fabric of Jewish life, could not be tolerated. And in fact, the emphasis throughout the proceedings against Spinoza was more on his acts than on his opinions (so long as he kept those to himself); for the survival of Judaism—as Spinoza himself was later to maintain—had never depended on theory, but rather on a complex network of specific and particular actions.

The Amsterdam community, it must be remembered, was still living in the shadow of the Inquisition, whose persecutions continued unabated on the Iberian peninsula. Refugees from Spain and Portugal continued to arrive in Holland in a steady stream. In May 1655, fourteen months before Spinoza was excommunicated, one Avraham Nuñez Bernal, who had relatives and acquaintances in Amsterdam, was burned at the stake in Cordova; the community was much shaken by the news. Two months before, another young martyr, Yitzhak da Alameida Bernal, was burned at the stake in Galicia, and Spinoza himself speaks in his letter of yet a third victim of the Inquisition whose fate must surely have shocked him deeply. Given these events, the Amsterdam community felt itself to be living in a state of emergency: it was fighting to crystallize its own Jewish life from within and at the same time to provide both physical security and a new social and spiritual ident-

* J. L. Teicher, "Why Was Spinoza Banned?" *Menorah Journal* 45 (1957), pp. 41-60.

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ity to the refugees from the Inquisition. Against this background, Spinoza's challenge could only be interpreted as profoundly dangerous to the community, and an action which had to be defended against by every possible means.

On the other hand—and there is no need to elaborate here—Spinoza's stand was also justified. As against the weight of tradition, Spinoza demanded that the tradition itself be subjected to the test of his individual judgment and reason, and refused to accept any truth—or any practical or moral commandment—unless it was compatible with his own subjective consciousness when following the guidelines of universal reason. From the point of view of the guardians of the tradition he was questioning, this was a destructive and subversive principle; but from the point of view of his own dignity and freedom as a man, it was an act of progress and emancipation. In this sense, Spinoza's break with both Judaism and Christianity was a harbinger of the modern era.

Spinoza's excommunication should thus be seen as a non-tragic clash between two valid points of view. Hegel defined tragedy as the clash of justice with justice; but in Spinoza's case the drama ended without a fall, without death or extraordinary suffering, and therefore without tragedy. Indeed, popular legend has greatly exaggerated his case. He was never impoverished, he was never the victim of persecution, and he did not live out his life as a social outcast. Although he had cut himself off from all religious affiliations, and although he was alone in the deepest sense of the word (having no true intellectual or spiritual peers even among his colleagues), Spinoza did not lead the life of an embittered or alienated man, but remained open to social relationships and acquired both friends and admirers. Nor did he lack the means of a livelihood. Though his needs were modest, he did not deny himself the small pleasures of life, and he scorned the ascetic ideal both personally and on principle.

The notion that he was obliged to grind lenses for a living is also highly exaggerated: in fact, Spinoza lived on a rather generous allowance provided by friends to enable him to pursue his studies. He ground lenses mainly in order to further his own research into optics, which was then a new and pioneering science. In one respect, though, the legend is not entirely inaccurate: it *is* possible that the glass dust from the lenses may have hastened the progression of the hereditary lung disease (apparently consumption) from which Spinoza suffered, a disease for which the causes were not then known, and from which Spinoza died at the age of forty-four on February 21, 1677—three hundred years ago this year.

From time to time, petitions are made to have Spinoza's excommunication revoked. In 1925, the late critic and historian Joseph Klausner stood on Mount Scopus and proclaimed: "Baruch Spinoza, you are our brother, you are our brother." In the 1950's, David Ben-Gurion conducted a campaign to have the ban lifted. And in 1953, the then Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yitzhak (Isaac) Halevi Herzog, replied to an application from the late G. Herz Shikmoni, director of the "Spinozeum" in Haifa, asking him if the excommunication was still in force from the point of view of the halakhah. The rabbi divided his response into two parts. In reply to the question of whether the excommunication was intended to apply only to Spinoza's lifetime or also to future generations, Rabbi Herzog did not rule, leaving the matter open to further consideration. But with regard to the ban on Spinoza's *works*, the rabbinical ruling was clear:

> . . . I have examined the text of the proclamation [the writ of excommunication quoted at the beginning of this article] and I have found: (a) at the end in regard to his books and composition it is written only "we warn" and not "we warn to excommunicate"; (b) even if we say that we can deduce the end from the beginning, it is shown by the language of the above sentence that the intention is not specified for future generations, but only for the period of Spinoza's lifetime. It is possible that it was thought unnecessary to prolong the period of the ban, and it is possible that due to modesty the authorities did not wish to rule for future generations. Be this as it may, it seems that the ban on the reading of Spinoza's books and compositions no longer stands.

A legalistic quibble, in other words, enabled the Chief Rabbi to rule that there was no longer a ban on the reading of Spinoza. And one gains the impression from the beginning of the letter that Rabbi Herzog was also seeking a loophole that would have enabled him to rule that the excommunication, too, was no longer in force.

But the question remains as to whether all these attempts to have the excommunication revoked are not really beside the point. In my opinion, they are. Spinoza does not stand in need of certification by the authorities, whoever they may be, and one cannot but be struck by the astonishing discrepancy between his importance in the history of civilization and the attempts being made to gain institutional legitimization for him today. (Those who seem unaware of this discrepancy should perhaps be reminded that even according to the halakhah, "an Israelite, even when he has sinned, is nevertheless an Israelite," and this includes those who have been excommunicated and anathematized.) Spinoza remains a Jew—heretical, sinning, or secular, as we wish; his problematic Jewishness is a fact which cannot be blotted out.

The significance of the excommunication was in isolating Spinoza from the actual Jewish community of his day, and whoever wishes to revoke it today is therefore late by three hundred years. The demand to revoke the excommunication

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would not sound anachronistic only if we were to see its meaning as symbolic—national, perhaps, or ideological—rather than purely religious; in such a case, however, we would be in the untenable position of both adopting the religious concept of excommunication (as implied in the demand to revoke Spinoza's ban) and at the same time rejecting it (by changing its meaning).

Lastly, and this is perhaps the crux of the matter, who in the Jewish world today might be authorized to accept Spinoza back into the Jewish fold? The Lubavitcher Rebbe? The Prime Minister of Israel? The President of Yeshiva University? The B'nai B'rith? There is no longer a single normative Judaism today—a development of which Spinoza himself was one of the harbingers.

In abandoning the observant Judaism of his day, but refusing to convert to Christianity, Spinoza unwittingly embodied the alternatives which lay in wait for Jews of later generations. Perhaps we can see in him the first secular Jew, at a time when this category did not yet exist in any sense; with equal justice, we might regard his case as embodying the assimilationist option. In short, Spinoza prefigures a number of the problems stemming from the encounter of Judaism with the modern world. As a result of this encounter, we no longer have one norm of Jewish existence today. We have Orthodox and secular Jews, Conservative and Reform Jews, Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews, and nuances and sub-categories within all of these; in fact our Judaism today is determined by the way we live it, and not by any one compulsory model. This being the case, we no longer possess an institution or an individual empowered with the authority to include or exclude, to excommunicate or bring back to the fold (even symbolically). Since Spinoza himself foretold this development (less in his philosophy than in his biography and personal fate), he has once more become central to our thinking about Judaism and the complexities of its existence and survival.

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A Note on the New Equality

Eugene J. McCarthy

DOROTHY SAYERS, in her book *The Mind of the Maker,* quotes a memorable passage from a lecture by L.P. Jacks, given in the 1920's:

> I am informed by philologists that the rise to power of these two words, "problem" and "solution," as the dominating terms of public debate is an affair of the last two centuries, and especially of the 19th, having synchronized, so they say, with a parallel rise to power of the word "happiness." . . . On the whole, the influence of these words is malign, and becomes increasingly so. They have deluded poor men with Messianic expectations, which are fatal to steadfast persistence in good workmanship and to well-doing in general. Let the valiant citizen never be ashamed to confess that he has "no solution to the social problem" to offer his fellow-men. Let him offer them rather the service of his skill, his vigilance, his fortitude, and his probity. For the matter in question is not primarily a problem, nor the answer to it a solution.

The words "problem" and "solution" still beset public debate and inquiry. Task forces to identify and define problems are the mark of government at every level, and also of business and of institutions and organizations. "Problem-solving" is a national preoccupation. But if problem-solving is still associated with "happiness," it has also come to be associated with a word of comparable, if not greater, significance and influence in social, political, and economic thought today. That word, of course, is "equality."

Alexis de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America,* wrote of the powerful appeal and danger of the idea of equality in a democratic society. He wrote also of its potential for demagoguery. I would be less concerned about the rise to popularity of the word, and the idea, if I thought it the result of conscious intention to elicit political support—that is, if those who made the appeal knew that they were being demagogic. I fear, however, that the use of the word is not intentionally demagogic. It seems to approach the automatic "It is good" justification that George Orwell described as characterizing the world order of 1984.

IN HIS inaugural address President Carter said: "We have already found a high degree of personal liberty, and we are now struggling to enhance equality of opportunity." One may well question the President's language. Liberty was a goal of the American Revolution. We have it in this country not because we "found" it but rather as a result of our having declared it a political and social goal and then achieving it in some measure. As to the President's second point, that "we are now struggling to enhance equality of opportunity," such language does not clearly describe the concept of "equality" as it is applied today. Economic, educational, political, and cultural equality—and not equality of opportunity, "enhanced" or otherwise—is the goal in the new application.

Economic equality is in this new conception to be achieved primarily through equalizing income. Equalization of wealth—that is, of wealth already accumulated—may come later. Economic equality is not conceived as a base upon which differences may then build, but as an average. One state governor occasionally asks if it might be better if people doing unpleasant work were paid as much as or more than those whose work is culturally and physically preferable.

Political economists have developed the notion of a negative income tax as the basis for tax reform. Essentially the idea is this: that everyone should have enough income to pay taxes at the beginning or threshold rate, and that if one does not have enough income to reach that level, something should be done to make up for the deficiency. Where the idea came from, or how the taxable level of income was chosen as the absolute standard for relative judgments and adjustments, is not clear. It seems that the tax base is to be accepted as a first principle upon which we are to build. It is an axiom, rather like "I think, therefore I am." One could as well arbitrarily assert that everyone should, for the good of the commonwealth, pay $100 in income taxes, and then proceed through measures of redistribution to raise all incomes to the level at which everyone would have to pay $100 in taxes.

The idea of a negative income tax is appealing. Professors of political economics can diagram its operation. Ideas that can be diagrammed, especially in economics and in political science, are very popular. It is easier to teach with a diagram or chart. A diagram conveys an impression of certainty. Thus the business-cycle theory of economics was popular because the charting of the cycle gave the appearance of scientific order in a

EUGENE J. MCCARTHY *is the former U.S. Senator from Minnesota.*

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confused discipline. Prosperity was followed by recession, and that in turn by depression, after which the cycle swung up through recovery back to prosperity. The theory seemed to have the certainty of the seasons or of the phases of the moon—until the economic moon went down in 1929 and did not come up.

THE second area in which the new concept of equality is being applied is in politics and government. The principle of one-person-one-vote was formally recognized in a Supreme Court ruling affecting defined political jurisdictions. The court did not in its ruling extend the principle to relationships among jurisdictions. The ruling simply said that, within given units of government, each vote should be equal to every other vote. Thus, since the Constitution provides for direct election of the House of Representatives on the basis of population, the rule requires that each congressional district have roughly the same number of persons.

The Constitution also provides that each state, no matter what its size, shall have two Senators. Thus the citizen of a small state gets proportionally more of a vote than the resident of a large state. The Constitution further provides that the President shall be elected through the Electoral College, on a state-by-state basis, thus weighting the votes of smaller states favorably as against those cast in larger states. The drive now is to eliminate that weighting by abolishing the Electoral College and instituting direct popular election of the President. No proposal has yet been made to reduce senatorial representation to a strict population base.

The principle of equality is also applied through the Federal Election Campaign Act, which attempts to equalize the non-voting influence of citizens on candidates for political office. The present law limits the size of contributions to a political candidate in any one campaign to $1,000 per contributor. This is considered a transitional phase to a time when all campaigns will be publicly financed. The argument for the limitation is that the larger the contribution, the greater the influence a contributor has on the officeholder and the more time he gets to spend with the officeholder. Theoretically, with public financing, every taxpayer will have made an equal contribution and will be entitled to as much time with the officeholder as any other taxpayer. What time non-taxpayers will get has not yet been determined by the reformers. Despite the $1,000 limit on contributions in the last national elections, and the fact that the presidential campaigns were financed principally through federal grants, within a few days of the election President-elect Carter flew to St. Simon's Island, the domain of the Reynolds family, and President Ford went to Palm Springs—presumably to speak to the average citizens who dwell in those precincts.

It does not take much imagination to foresee a time when citizens might go to court, charging that they were discriminated against because their calls were not taken in presidential telethons and transmitted to the President for his attention. A full practical application of this principle would argue for an equal right to speak or otherwise communicate with all officeholders, even removing the personal screening of Walter Cronkite.

THE objective of equalizing communications and influence on officeholders is also sought in efforts to control lobbyists. Proposals generally recommend more thorough regulation of lobbyists, limits on their expenditures, and public disclosure not only of expenditures but also of meetings and communications with officeholders.

It will not be surprising if someone suggests having lobbyists provided at government expense, so as to insulate them from the undue influence of their principals, in somewhat the same way that officeholders are to be insulated from their constituencies. Under this arrangement, anyone who had a case to make to the government would apply for a lobbyist who would be assigned from a pool in the way that public defenders are assigned by the courts. There could be classes of lobbyists (Number 1, Number 2, etc.) who would be assigned by a commission according to the seriousness or difficulty of the case to be made to the government. This procedure would establish a second level of purity and of detachment. A third and fourth might be added in pursuit of that absolute certainty and safety sought by the animal in Franz Kafka's story, "The Burrow."

The new concept of equality is also applied in government and government-influenced employment practices, in what has been labeled the "quota system." The rationale of the quota system is that, since not every person can be hired, we should have within each employed group a representation or sampling of the total employable work force. Selection currently is on the basis of physiological characteristics of age, sex, and race. There are some obvious historical reasons as to why these standards are being tried. There are also some obvious difficulties in their application, especially if one attempts to extend the principle—as will surely be done—to other racial and ethnic groups, or to groups less easily defined in terms of psychological and cultural differences.

A similar drive to realize the new idea of equality has marked educational development in recent years. The standardized curriculum, quota admissions, open admissions, and free college education are all manifestations of this drive. Full application of the principle could lead to compulsory college education, with the level of education so reduced that all who enter do so with assurance of successful graduation. With no possible abandonment of hope at any point, they could look forward to something like the judgment of the Dodo after the caucus race in *Alice in Wonderland: "Everybody* has won, and *all* must have prizes."

WHAT are the dangers in this drive to a newly conceived equality? I see a danger first in the inevitable weakening of those institutions that are expected to give form and direction to society, such as profes-

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sional and educational institutions, and which have traditionally been treated as having an identity separate from politically-controlled areas of society.

I see it also as significantly affecting the individual's conception of his place in society. Most persons cannot stand either physical or cultural isolation, and will seek a base of some certainty in a community of persons and in a cultural complex. The cultural security of Americans traditionally has been found in a society of some tension, but a society in which a balance between individual freedom and liberty on the one side and the social good on the other could be achieved. The alternative now offered, the security of equalization, is depersonalizing. It is a deceptively angelistic conception of man in society. It is one which cannot be sustained. It will in all likelihood move persons in search of security, if not identity, to accept greater and greater socialization in politics, in economics, and in culture.

Music

The Mahler Everyone Loves

Samuel Lipman

GUSTAV MAHLER, it would seem, is our most successful 20th-century composer. Despite the fact that the century is now almost eighty years old—and that Mahler died more than sixty-six years ago—his is still the newest name to penetrate the consciousness of both musicians and non-musicians, of committed fans and casual concert-goers alike.

The frequency of concert performance of his music is itself impressive. In the number of times his works have been played by the New York Philharmonic, we are told, he shares third place with Tchaikowsky, behind only Beethoven and Brahms. Just one year ago, the New York Philharmonic spent the month of September at Carnegie Hall doing a Mahler Festival which included most of his compositions; and this itself was only a replay of the Bernstein-Mitropoulos Mahler celebration of 1960, which may be said to have made Mahler big time in the American musical world. And even in the Soviet Union, where Mahler's music had fallen under the Stalinist ban, by the 1960's no secret was being made of Dmitri Shostakovich's high regard for Mahler, and Yevgeny Svetlanov, the conductor of the State Symphony Orchestra of the USSR, could say: "I personally consider Mahler the greatest genius of all peoples and all times."

On records, the story is the same. Important conductors—among them Bernstein (Columbia), Bernard Haitink (Philips), Rafael Kubelik (Deutsche Grammophon), and Georg Solti (London)—have, by their complete sets of the Mahler symphonies, furthered their careers as such careers have always been furthered: by convincing audiences that they are hearing personal interpretations of vital and relevant music only recently come to public attention and recognition. As for recordings of the individual symphonies, one of the *least* popular—the Seventh—is currently available in no fewer than five separate stereo versions. Of the more popular works, the First and Fourth Symphonies are available in thirteen performances each, and the Second in twelve. And in an attempt by a record manufacturer to serve an even larger market than is made up by the lovers of serious music, works of Mahler have been packaged on one of the releases in London's "Orphic Egg" series under the title "Mahler's Head," with liner notes by Dave Marsh, the editor of *Creem* magazine.

Not only is there a rush to perform those pieces of Mahler which are by now familiar, but his forgotten early works are exhumed, and one of them—his ballad *Das klagende Lied* ("The Wailing Song")—has been recorded for Columbia by no less a musical figure than Pierre Boulez. At the other end of Mahler's life, there have been the variously successful attempts to complete and render performable the entire corpus of his Tenth Symphony, left unfinished at his death.

In addition to recordings and concerts, Mahler has captured the imagination of moviemakers. Ken Russell has included Mahler in his collection of artistic subjects, and Luchino Visconti, having discovered that Thomas Mann was thinking of Mahler while working on *Death in Venice* in 1911, turned Mann's hero, the author Aschenbach, into a composer and used Mahler's music for the film score. The liner notes for the Deutsche Grammophon recording of this score call it "the most beautiful film music ever written."

SAMUEL LIPMAN *is a concert pianist whose music criticism appears regularly in these pages. Mr. Lipman has received an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for his articles in* COMMENTARY.

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The fourth and final underpinning of Mahler's present popularity is the emergence of a Mahler literary industry, ranging from musicological studies through biography to large new gift books splendidly illustrated and printed on expensive paper. The musicological works subject Mahler to the kind of exegetical analysis heretofore reserved for the music of Bach and Beethoven, and among the increasing number of treatments of Mahler's life are two volumes (so far) by Donald Mitchell and the excellent short biography by Kurt Blaukopf, which appeared in Germany in 1969 and in English translation in 1973. In that same year, the numerous previous biographies were crowned by the publication of Henry-Louis de La Grange's ineffably detailed *Mahler*; this work, whose second and possibly concluding volume seems eagerly awaited, constitutes the most ambitious and exhaustive book written about the life of a musical figure since Ernest Newman's four-volume study of Richard Wagner was issued over a thirteen-year period from 1933 to 1946. And not even Newman, no slouch when it came to searching out and recounting minutiae, displayed the consuming passion for intimate facts and buried references which characterizes the work of the indefatigable de La Grange.

For display on the proverbial coffee table, the new presentation books on Mahler* demonstrate, in their similarity to two recent works celebrating Wagner and the centenary of Bayreuth (and even brought out by the same publishers, Oxford and Rizzoli), just how great a composer Mahler is presently seen to be. The Oxford volume concentrates on documents, often reproduced in facsimile, and illustrations of Mahler and his friends in their musical and geographical habitats; the Rizzoli volume confines itself to fairly long articles—among them an introductory essay by Boulez—as well as illustrations covering Mahler's career in Vienna before, during, and after his engagement as Director of the Vienna Opera.

ALL this present activity and reclame surrounding Mahler and his music contrast oddly with the bleak, depressing picture of pain and failure one carries away from most of the literature about him. For it is a literature that represents him as obsessed, oversensitive, born to suffer, and above all doomed by a cruel fate which begrudged him the happiness and success properly owing to a supremely great artist.

Mahler was born in 1860, in his own expression a Bohemian among Austrians, an Austrian among Germans, and a Jew among the nations. His parents were ill-matched and poor. Of his eleven siblings, five died in infancy, one died at the age of thirteen, and one committed suicide at twenty-five. Gustav, the eldest survivor, did poorly in school but seemed greatly talented in music. At fifteen, he entered the Vienna Conservatory where he had a checkered career. Upon graduation in 1878, however, he won a prize for composition and formed a sympathetic relationship with the outcast Anton Bruckner (of whose Third Symphony he had helped make a piano transcription).

His professional career began in 1880 with a position as conductor in a tiny summer theater where the standards were mean and the duties unsatisfying. But from there he went on to a series of other conducting jobs, each one more important than the last. As he gained in experience and authority, his reputation also grew, so that within fifteen years he had become a serious contender for the most important post of all and the one of which he had always dreamed—Director of the Vienna Opera.

This dream of a triumphal return to Vienna was aided by the support of such figures as the already mythic Brahms, Eduard Hanslick, the greatly powerful critic of the *Neue Freie Presse*, and Rosa Papier, an influential singing teacher and mistress of both political intrigue and a high official in the Imperial and Royal Court. As against all this, Mahler had an almost crippling disadvantage—his having been born a Jew. But he let it be known that he had been (rather freshly) converted to Roman Catholicism; with the obstacle of Jewishness out of the way, he was named a conductor at the Vienna Opera in 1897 and shortly thereafter its Director.

The decade he spent in Vienna was considered a golden age by his admirers, but as the years passed, the Viennese opposition to him (which contained a strong anti-Semitic component) quickened. Thus he welcomed the offer made him in 1907 to become principal conductor at the Metropolitan Opera House. He opened in New York with *Tristan und Isolde* and scored heavily. Soon, just as the possibility arose at the Met of conflict with the newly arrived Arturo Toscanini, the constitution of the New York Philharmonic was altered to permit him to become its director with absolute control. This was the last post he was ever to occupy.

All this time, of course, Mahler had also been composing. Unlike Richard Strauss, he found it impossible to write music during the winter when he was busy as a conductor, but he did manage to set aside the summers for composing. Moving on from the grandiose dimensions of *Das klagende Lied*, he converted the experience of an unhappy love affair into the *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* ("Songs of a Wayfarer"), based on his own adaptation of texts drawn from the early 19th-century collection of German folksongs, *Des Knabens Wunderhorn* ("The Youth's Magic Horn"). These poems of doomed love provided Mahler with the literary framework for the musical mood he was to cultivate all his life—a melancholia simultaneously abject and lofty, disturbed by frequent interjections of coarse peasant humor, and saved by the prospect of redemption both sublime and certain.

Although more and more celebrated as a conductor, Mahler the composer was forced to suffer rebuffs both from critics who disliked the few public performances he was able to arrange (sometimes with his own funds) and—much worse, of course—from those great men whom he most admired and who were his greatest supporters as a conductor—Brahms and the famous pianist and conductor Hans

* *Mahler: A Documentary Study*, edited by Kurt Blaukopf, Oxford University Press, 280 pp., $37.50; *Gustav Mahler in Vienna*, edited by Sigrid Wiesmann, Rizzoli, 160 pp., $25.00.

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von Bülow. He felt Brahms had, when serving as a juror for the Beethoven Prize in 1881, blocked him from winning with *Das klagende Lied*; and Bülow had exclaimed after Mahler played for him part of what was to become his Second Symphony: "If what I have just heard is music, then I no longer understand anything about music!" When Bülow died in 1894, Mahler was finally able to complete that symphony, and in 1895 he began a third.

By the time of his death in 1911 he had composed nine symphonies, with the Tenth existing in a far-advanced sketch. He had also added to his works for voice and orchestra *Das Lied von der Erde* ("The Song of the Earth"), a cycle written to poems from the Chinese, and the *Kindertotenlieder* ("Songs for Dead Children"). These last, settings of Rückert poems, though begun before the arrival of his first child in 1902, and completed two years later, eventually became his memorial to the death of that child from scarlet fever and diphtheria in 1907.

His own death four years later seemed to put paid to his career both as conductor and composer. In an era before recordings, his conducting would only be quickly forgotten, and his music could no longer profit from the performances his power as a conductor was able to garner. Not only did the predominantly conservative audience of the day find his music too modern for its taste as compared to the great Viennese masters, but music itself was changing; the decadent and overblown romanticism which Mahler seemed to typify was being replaced by the new aesthetics of expressionism, primitivism, and neoclassicism. In 1908, Schoenberg had, in his Second String Quartet, followed a quasi-atonal passage with a setting of the famous words of Stefan George, "I feel an air from other planets blowing"; in 1911, the year of Mahler's death, Stravinsky began work on *Le Sacre du Printemps* and Strauss started *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Then came World War I which, with its four years of unprecedented slaughter and destruction, was everywhere felt to mark the burial of the world of 19th-century sentimentality and self-indulgence.

So the brief spurt in Mahler performances in Vienna immediately after the war, no less than the Amsterdam Mahler Festival in 1920, seemed no more than a limited nostalgic survival. His music remained fitfully popular in German-speaking countries, and even that limited fame vanished in the avalanche of Nazi anti-Semitism. As far as Anglo-Saxon countries were concerned, it was only the influx of refugee conductors—and, one suspects, refugee audiences—in the 1930's that led to any widespread programming of Mahler's music.

After World War II the phenomenal development of recording based on magnetic tape and the long-playing disc made possible—at first monaurally and after 1958 still more effectively in stereo—the presentation of Mahler's music as he had conceived it, full of clearly heard polyphony distributed among the instruments of the orchestra by novel scoring and the separation of textures through actual physical spacing. From this point, it was only to be expected that he would quickly reach his present eminence; had not Mahler been told by an irate listener whom he was admonishing for booing a work of Schoenberg, "I hiss your symphonies too"? Thus, at long last, justice was done, and Mahler's prophecy about himself—"My time will come!"—was fulfilled.

THIS impression of martyrdom and resurrection, of personal tragedy and artistic survival, of public error redressed by public adulation, is the idea of Mahler we get not only from his biographies, or even from such a painstaking effort as that of de La Grange. On an artistic and philosophical level far surpassing a mere recounting of the facts of the composer's life, we find Pierre Boulez beginning his piece on Mahler —the introductory article to *Gustav Mahler in Vienna*—with the words: "How long it took until he stepped forth, not from the shadows but from purgatory! A long lasting purgatory that held him prisoner for a thousand reasons. . . ." And more than sixty years earlier, just after Mahler's death, the same note was sounded by perhaps the seminal figure of 20th-century musical thought. For Arnold Schoenberg

> Gustav Mahler was a saint.
>
> Anyone who knew him even slightly must have had that feeling. Perhaps only a few understood it. And among even those few the only ones who honored him were the men of good will. The others reacted to the saint as the wholly evil have always reacted to complete goodness and greatness: they martyred him.
>
> They carried things so far that this great man doubted his own work. Not once was the cup allowed to pass away from him. . . .
>
> Rarely has anyone been treated so badly by the world; nobody, perhaps, worse.

It is clear that what Schoenberg is propounding here is a myth of Mahler as Christ. But the problem with this myth, as perhaps with all religious stories, is that its emotive force does not guarantee historical exactitude. At the least, as we learn from the facts if not from the mood of the Mahler biographies, the history is vastly more complicated and ambiguous than the myth. Arguably, what we have in the case of Mahler is a life in many ways closer to a fabulous success story than to the martyrdom of Schoenberg's homily.

Consider those facts: A poor Jewish boy from a provincial Central European backwater, born to a family barely participant in even such limited emancipation as the 19th century allowed to his people, without outside material assistance, without effulgent charm, nonetheless in a short life of fifty years goes from smaller to ever larger assignments, from the shadow of his father's near-poverty to a leading position on the world artistic stage. As Director of the Vienna Opera, the most important opera house in the world, he is able to refuse a personal request concerning the hiring of an artist from the Emperor Franz Josef himself, from whose purse the Opera subsidy is drawn. His conducting is greeted by wild enthusiasm in a most significant part of the European press and he is made a handsome offer to come to America where again he scores triumph after triumph.

As a composer his success was less

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flamboyant, but his works were earning enough royalties by the end of his life to support the publication of the music of Bruckner. By then, too, Mahler's works, considering that they required such extravagant forces, were being performed reasonably close to the time they were written: his Eighth Symphony —called the "Symphony of a Thousand" because of the number of performers needed—was finished in 1907 and performed in 1910. The young Bruno Walter and the already established and famous conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Willem Mengelberg, were both avid proselytizers for Mahler.* In addition, his music received the public support and approval of Richard Strauss, the most successful composer and one of the most powerful conductors of the day.

Plainly, the evidence exists to support either a triumphant or a tragic interpretation of Mahler's musical career. Why then does the tragic interpretation prevail in most of the literature about Mahler? To answer this question one must proceed to an assessment of his achievement, and use that standard to evaluate both how he fared while alive and how he has been seen in the years since his death.

PERHAPS the easiest aspect of Mahler's career to evaluate is his conducting. There can be little doubt that he was one of the greatest figures in the rather brief history of that branch of musical performance—the founder of the 20th-century tradition of the virtuoso music director as a creative musical force.

Musically, by claiming the right in the classics not only to change tempos and dynamics in ways not indicated in the score but also and more importantly to alter in ways large and small the very written notes themselves, he contradicted the sober and respectful approach of his admired predecessors and colleagues in Vienna. To this willingness to alter the written notes, he added a sense of rhythmic flow which depended upon fluctuating tempos rather than classical steadiness; in this he has been followed by such conductors as Wilhelm Furtwängler, and in our time Leonard Bernstein, rather than the literalist school popularly exemplified by Toscanini and Pierre Monteux. His choice of repertory, in its alertness to new music (even to music which he disliked) and its revivification of acknowledged masterpieces, provides a model worthy of study, particularly today. Regrettably, however, it is his personal behavior, so demanding as to verge on cruelty, that has been taken up as a model by too many of his successors. Perhaps as a result of that behavior, he was able to extend into the area of orchestral music that ascendancy of the performer over the music which had been earlier accomplished for the piano and the violin (and of course the voice) in the 19th century.

Much the same verdict can be passed on his work both as a musical administrator and opera producer. Throughout his career, wherever he had the chance, he enforced the idea that the director of a musical institution ought to combine managerial and artistic control, and that such control rightly belonged to the institution's chief performing artist, the conductor. He also reformed contemporary notions of opera production by diminishing the role of star singers in favor of the ensemble as a whole, and by allowing new ideas of staging and design to begin the process of destroying 19th-century operatic naturalism. He was thus the spiritual forebear of the revolution in operatic staging associated with Wieland Wagner and post-World War II Bayreuth.

BUT it is of course as a composer that Mahler's achievement must finally be judged. And here it must be said that an assessment of Mahler written from this time and place cannot substantiate a ranking of him on the level of the very few immortals of classical music. His output is much smaller than theirs, it is restricted almost solely to orchestral music instead of the enormous variety of musical media characteristically used by the immortals, and its narrow concentration on disappointment, depression, and despair contrasts sharply and unfavorably with the vast emotional range of a Bach, a Mozart, a Beethoven.

Viewed strictly in formal terms, Mahler's pieces fail to achieve the perfection one associates with the work of the highest masters, the perfect relationship between means and ends. Each piece—the slow movements excepted—is full of starts and stops, of strains and anticlimaxes. And most important, his music often lacks stylistic assurance and integrity—the ability to convince the listener that the composer is speaking with his own voice, and that of no one else.

For Mahler's compositions are those of a late 19th-century romantic, a continuer and developer of the tradition of Austro-German music. This tradition contains, in the music running from Bach to Brahms and Wagner, the most widely and strongly appealing serious music ever written. In the operatic world it is challenged only by the Italianate works of Verdi and Puccini which, however, it deeply influenced. In the world of orchestral and instrumental music it is unchallenged and is today the backbone and by far the largest part of the repertory. What a general audience hears and loves in Mahler is precisely his membership in that tradition, and his ability to draw, most especially in his beautiful slow movements, on the legacy of Beethoven, Wagner, Liszt, Brahms, and Bruckner. If Mahler cannot be considered a great melodist—notwithstanding the affective power of his melodic writing —it is because his tunes are evocative of the old rather than newly creative in their own right.

Nor is this reliance on the past limited to his slow music or to his relation to his great predecessors. It is implicit in all his material, so much of which is drawn from trumpet and horn calls, and from folk music. A particularly interesting example of this process, because it is at the same time so obvious and so little remarked, is the extraordinarily close resemblance between much of the posthorn solo in Mahler's Third Symphony and

* Fortunately, both these conductors recorded some of the works of Mahler: the Fourth Symphony performed by Mengelberg was available on Turnabout until recently, and the Walter recordings of five Mahler symphonies are still available on Columbia/Odyssey.

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one of the themes of Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody*, written in 1863; significantly, Mahler's work was written in June and July of 1895, and we learn from de La Grange—though he does not mention the connection—that the great Italian pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni was soloist in his own arrangement of the *Spanish Rhapsody* with Mahler as conductor in Hamburg in October 1894. And even Liszt's usage of the theme is second-hand, for it is in origin part of a well-known *jota* from Spanish Aragon.

Another and very significant characteristic of Mahler's melodic writing is the instrumental function these melodies serve even when they are scored, as so often happens in his work, for voice and accompany a text. Beethoven made a revolutionary alteration in the conception of symphonic music when he ended the Ninth Symphony with a solo vocal and choral setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy." But two widely divergent paths were taken as a result of this revolution. One was to use the orchestra as a means of extending and completing the work of the voice, as in the music-dramas of Wagner. The other road—chosen by Mahler and his successors—was to use the voice and even the sound of the text itself as an acoustical and thus instrumental component of the orchestra.

It is here that one may find the most satisfactory answer to the persistently asked question of why Mahler, the greatest of opera conductors, never composed an opera. The answer is implicit in his vocal writing; no matter how much he needed the stimulus of a verbal text to fire his musical imagination, he did not view the voice as the embodiment of a character. For Mahler the voice was a sound of great beauty to be orchestrated, not the expression of a human being with an independent existence. The practical consequence of Mahler's treatment of the voice is that singers are chosen for Mahler performances today not for their ability to project the text but rather for their beautiful creamy sound and its capacity to blend with rather than stand out against the orchestra.

YET to judge Mahler so harshly is to say no more than that he falls short of six or so individuals out of the tens of thousands who have composed in the past three centuries of the flowering of Western music. Below that level of exalted, quasi-divine genius there are many composers who wrote music of beauty and force. In the symphonic tradition in which Mahler worked there were several such composers writing at roughly the same time. Coming slightly before him were Dvorak and Tchaikowsky—whose *Symphonie pathétique* resembles in its fundamental pessimism much of the mature work of Mahler. And coming slightly later were Rachmaninoff and the composer Mahler replaced in the affection of English and American audiences, Sibelius. Though there are of course significant differences in the nature and quality of these men's music, they remain linked as epigones of the 19th-century greats. Mahler's relation to Strauss is a more difficult matter; certainly one cannot know whether Mahler would have followed Strauss in his retreat after the dissonant modernism of *Elektra* into the enclosed garden of classicism, or instead have gone along with Schoenberg into the rejection of an easily comprehensible music.

IF THIS assessment of Mahler as a composer is correct, it follows that there was, even in his lifetime, a rough equivalence between his musical worth and his career. No one expects the path of new serious music to be easy, and naturally a famous performer is more generously remunerated than a composer. And if his reputation as a composer grew after death while the memory of him as a conductor faded, that too does not seem unnatural. Why, then, is he seen today as a specially tragic figure?

There are at least two parts to the answer. The first is perhaps less important; in any case, it is trite, cruel, and to the artist deeply offensive. It is the idea that an artist must pay for his creative powers with his life. One sees this delusion in the 19th-century view of the artist as either tubercular or syphilitic; Thomas Mann played on both these ideas, most directly in *The Magic Mountain* and in *Doctor Faustus*. In our time this idea satisfies, by its crude retributive justice, the fans of great movie and rock stars like James Dean, Janis Joplin, and Elvis Presley—and it may well have been the prospect of just such a denouement which inspired the camp followers of Maria Callas. Not only does this view of the artist's suffering and death enable the audience to master its otherwise overwhelming envy; it contributes to the comforting feeling that the artist by dying has more fully lived for others. It is thus the tragedy of Mahler's life, including his career failures and personal miseries, which "proves" the authenticity of his art, whereas it is the success of Richard Strauss's life—his longevity, acclaim, and contentment—which "confirms" the basic falseness of which his music is often accused.

More interesting, however, is the way Mahler's life is conceived by musical intellectuals like Schoenberg and Boulez who see their own role as creators of the new in opposition to a superseded tradition. Though to a wide audience and to those musicians who primarily serve that audience, Mahler's general popularity rests on the appeal of his melodic writing, for the intellectuals his melodies and their rhetorical setting are initially embarrassing in their old-fashioned and vulgar sentimentality, their naked evocation of the passions of love and death. What the intellectuals have singled out as valuable in Mahler is his "modern" side—his violation of classical and even romantic bounds of length and permissible scale, his tendency to mockery and burlesque, his rapid alternation of wildly contrasting material, and his use of orchestral instruments in unaccustomed ranges and timbres.

Yet while it is true that these "modern" features can loosely be seen as adversary in the context of Mahler's time to a traditional conception of music—though no more so than much of the music Richard Strauss was writing during Mahler's lifetime—and thus responsible for much of the dislike with which Mahler's music was originally received, it is obvious that today they have lost their capacity to shock. Not only are they no longer seen as adversary, but they actually seem to

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the general audience to define the very nature of romantic music.

In any case, it is as a martyr to the new that musical intellectuals tend to revere Mahler—a tendency that can only be explained in the context of the predicament of new music in the past half-century. This predicament, for a long time called a crisis, can now fairly be called a collapse. Not all the government and foundation support, not all the tenured positions in colleges and universities, and not all the performances extorted in the name of the musician's duty to one's time can conceal the fact that there is not now, and has not been for decades, any intellectually admired new music being written which anyone outside a small educated group, highly conscious of its presumed historical role, has any desire to hear. Indeed, the major use of the word "contemporary" in music today refers to popular and "rock" music and not to classical music at all.

This verdict of failure has been passed despite an unprecedented burst of publicity from the most intellectually respected salesmen of culture to the masses—salesmen who in literature and painting have been fairly successful in communicating the gospel of the new. There is no point in denying that the sense of this failure, notwithstanding the mutual reinforcement musicians and composers have freely given each other, has bitten deep. No less than other hurts, the misery of public rejection loves company. What better company can there be than Gustav Mahler —so interested in the work of the young pariah Schoenberg, so conscious of the failure of his own music to elicit universal acclaim, and so confident of future vindication—when that same Gustav Mahler is now so plainly the darling of something approaching a mass audience?

It is this conjunction of the audience's love for what it hears as a deeply romantic and therefore essentially conventional music with a life which it is possible to see as martyrdom in the service of the new in art that is responsible for the current unanimity of opinion about Mahler. Here may be found the explanation of the otherwise incongruous appearance of Karlheinz Stockhausen, the *enfant terrible* of postwar avant-garde music, as the writer of a hagiographical introduction to de La Grange's biography of Mahler; here may also be found the meaning of Pierre Boulez's eagerness to secure the first complete recording rights to *Das klagende Lied*, despite the evident distaste Boulez shows for Mahler's grandiosity; here may also be found the reason for the use of Mahler quotations in the work of ambitious American modernist composers. It is as if they were all saying: "My time, too, like Mahler's, will come."

Though Mahler's present success and his contemporary image can be described and analyzed, it is obviously impossible to forecast the future rank his music will occupy. There is much truth in the motto which is so often quoted as describing the right of new art like Mahler's to be accepted—"To each epoch its art, to art its freedom." One cannot say whether the needs which his art fulfills today will be fulfilled in the same way in the future, or indeed whether these needs will even continue to exist. But one can point out the shaky nature of a reputation which depends upon a double weakness—in this case the desire of an audience for satisfactions from music which can artistically be better provided by the music of other composers, and the need of frustrated composers and musicians to reassure themselves about their own future by the arbitrary interpretation of the life of a man long dead.

Fiction

Philip Roth: Sonny Boy or Lenny Bruce?

Pearl K. Bell

Not so long ago, no one questioned the fact that the work of Philip Roth, whether damned or praised for its unrelenting comic assault on the Jewish family, Jewish attitudes about sex, and the mores of Jewish-American suburbia, aggressively represented, as well, less insular fashions in contemporary culture. But the Jews, as he saw them, have remained his central obsession. Although he launched his career in 1959 with a formidably accomplished volume of stories, and followed that with two flawed but substantial novels, it was *Portnoy's Complaint*—the scandalously explicit public revelation that Jewish adolescent boys did not just practice the violin and read Dostoevsky but also masturbated with strenuous hunger—that made him fortune's darling and, definitively, the rabbis' anathema. Appearing as it did toward the end of the 60's, Portnoy's frenetic monologue about his crippled sensuality brought the Jews at last into the rank-and-file of the sexual revolution, claiming their share of the decade's hectic liberation from puritanical caveats and the stultifying imperatives of reason and morality. Alexander Portnoy's brazen confession, as it seemed, emancipated Jewish intellectuals from their addiction to brainy ambition, and granted them the long overdue freedom to do what they pleased with their bodies, not only their nimble minds.

Roth, the Bolívar of the Jewish

PEARL K. BELL *reviewed Robert Coover's* The Public Burning *in last month's issue.*

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libido, won his moral victory for the amoral not because he was enlightening the innocents about the wicked practices of whacking off and fellatio—after all, they had been reading Henry Miller in a plain brown wrapper for years—but because he had the nerve to place the blame for Portnoy's sexual woe on the sacred figure of the Jewish mother. This, to Roth's defensive admirers, was his triumph in *Portnoy's Complaint*: he dared to say, loudly and angrily and righteously, using all the dirty words his mother would have been horrified to think he even knew, that the Jewish mother's goodness was a sentimental myth. What was the celebrated devotion of this woman to her children's nourishment, cleanliness, decorum, and scholastic excellence but a tyranny so disabling that it deprived her victims, especially the sons among them, of their natural right to lead a normal life? By this Roth appeared to mean sex untainted by guilt and the merciless stab of conscience, the uninhibited liberty to seek out the lineaments of gratified desire wherever and however he chose. As Roth wrote in one of his numerous self-exegeses: "Not even a Jew could put up a successful fight any longer against nonnegotiable demands of crude antisocial appetite and vulgar aggressive fantasy. . . ." This sexual ideology obviously had terrific political clout: why else would Roth use that banker's term, "non-negotiable," which was chanted (without a hint of irony) by the SDS on every embattled campus in the late 60's?

It has been increasingly clear in much of Roth's fiction since the spectacular success of *Portnoy's Complaint* that inside the jeering terrorist hurling stink bombs into the immaculate citadel of Jewish motherhood there is a moralist of sorts struggling to get out. In *My Life As a Man* (1974) and his new novel, *The Professor of Desire*,* the emancipated satyr we expected to see striding confidently out of his analyst's office forever, a guilt-free connoisseur ready to take on all those swinging types who advertise at the back of the *New York Review of Books*, is nowhere to be found. Instead, our hero—always "I" not "he"—is torn apart by two warring souls within his breast. At the age of twenty, thirty, *forty*, he still cannot decide what he wants to be when he grows up—the nice Jewish boy "so neat, so clean, so *charming* when the need arises," or the daring young man on the erotic trapeze.

THE mood and tone of *The Professor of Desire* are a good deal more tender and gentle than we have come to expect from this past-master of contemptuous ferocity, but the characters and their busy troubles are tediously familiar: the neurotic *shikse* wife, the hard-working Jewish parents, the reluctantly dutiful son, the lascivious wantons who are ready and willing for anything, the tough psychoanalyst, and so on. Why should Roth expect us to sit through another performance by this jaded ensemble? But he is a very clever fellow, and this time around he jolts us awake with an intriguing surprise. The man who reveals his secrets so freely in *The Professor of Desire* is David Kepesh, the unlucky expert on Chekhov who, in a short novel Roth published in 1972, was metamorphosed into a man-sized female breast.

Although the idea of *The Breast* was all too obviously borrowed from Kafka, the cackling *Schadenfreude* and waggish vulgarity were entirely Roth's own malefaction, another example of one writer's mead being another writer's hemlock. This gross fantasy seemed a peculiar departure for Roth because surrealism was the last thing one expected from a novelist whose work bristles with such a florid abundance of detail about the way people look, talk, dress, eat, make love, marry and divorce, cook, stand, and walk, a battery of cunning observation driving home a point as sharp as mustard. *The Breast*, though it certainly was not lacking in Roth's genius for the particular, yielded no message at all. "No crapola about Deep Meaning," Roth warned in an interview about the book, and that, one would have thought, settled the matter, or at any rate left it permanently up for critical grabs. For a writer who, as Irving Howe wrote, "keeps nagging and prodding and beating us over the head with the poker of his intentions," the apparently pointless inanity of *The Breast* was not worth the effort of unriddling.

It turns out, however, that the monstrous fate of Professor Kepesh was not a shaggy-dog story, or an anomalous footnote in the booming career of Philip Roth. In *The Professor of Desire*, Roth has now set out to unveil the meaning of Kepesh's grotesque transfiguration with a conscientiously realistic account of his pre-mammary life. Or so it would seem.

Parts of the story we already learned in *The Breast*, but that barely scratched the surface. In any case, David Kepesh grew up in the Catskills, where his parents owned the prosperous Hungarian Royale Hotel, a favorite of such Jewish big shots as the Apple King and the Herring King and the Pajama King, who came back year after year for their summer vacations. At eighteen David goes off to college in Syracuse, and finds his vocation in the study of comparative literature. A paragon of the classroom, he humiliatingly fails to score with all the girls he covets. But during a Fulbright year in London, he comes into his own as a sexual prodigy. While Icelandic poetry and Arthurian legend are left to fend for themselves, two hot tamales from Sweden initiate Kepesh into ecstasies of sexual perversity undreamed of in Sullivan County, leaving him insatiable, but also scared and envious of the girls' "total immunity from remorse and self-doubt." He is tempted to surrender to the satyr he has discovered within, but it is of course unthinkable for a serious young Jewish intellectual to drop out of graduate school in the 50's and become a full-time protégé of the Marquis de Sade. Kepesh puts satyr behind him and goes home to finish his Ph.D. at Stanford, where he eventually weds a Gentile knockout with an exotically promiscuous past. Predictably, love soon lies bleeding, and Kepesh goes to pieces as the marriage wears down to its sordid end.

Impotent, tormented by loneliness and despair, Kepesh finds a

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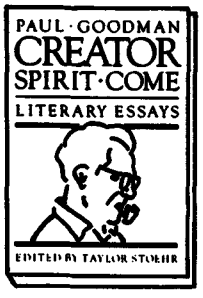

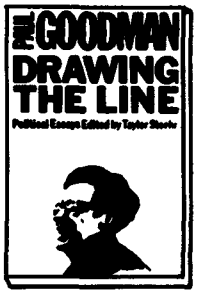

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teaching job on Long Island and moves to New York, where he hopes to be put together again by a hard-headed but kindly psychoanalyst, and is gradually raised from the slough of despond by a good and, needless to say, beautiful woman, a very different species of *shikse* from his domestically incompetent, narcissistic wife. Kepesh can scarcely credit his great fortune, but before long he mournfully realizes that soon he will no longer want her, will be gasping for release from "the lovely blandness" of his new-found Eden because "within a year my passion will be dead. Already it is dying and I am afraid that there is nothing I can do to save it." In the final pages, Roth coyly hints at the bizarre incarnation in store for poor Kepesh, though he disingenuously refrains from divulging what we already know.

BUT what idea, if any, is he trying to dramatize in this laborious charade? His meaning is not at all easy to fathom in *The Professor of Desire* or in *The Breast*, but if one turns for light and air to Roth's rather pompous collection of essays and interviews, *Reading Myself and Others* (1975), we find a didactic affirmation of the Goethean lament about *zwei Seelen*, so self-evident in his last two novels, but it does not provide much help in deciphering Kepesh's metamorphosis. Roth solemnly declares that the persistent theme of his books is

> the struggle to accommodate warring (or, at least, contending) impulses and desires, to negotiate some kind of inner peace or balance of power, or perhaps just to maintain hostilities at a low destructive level, between the ethical and social yearnings and the implacable, singular lusts for the flesh and its pleasures. The measured self vs. the insatiable self. The accommodating self vs. the ravenous self.

As a sententious acknowledgment of the contradictions that are part of the human lot, this is commendable, if hardly original.

But *Portnoy's Complaint* scarcely bears out Roth's claim that this has been his "persistent theme," and neither does *The Professor of Desire*. Portnoy doesn't want to accommodate his mother, or the allegedly debilitating forms of moral and social authority that she typifies. He wants to murder her (with the help of Dr. Spielvogel) and demolish the restraints that society imposes, "that barrier of personal inhibition, ethical conviction, and plain, old monumental fear," as Roth wrote in *Reading Myself*. Only then can Portnoy rid himself once and for all of the Jewish legacy of guilt, so that his implacable lust can reap the whirlwind. David Kepesh, for a change, does not share Portnoy's savage and self-exonerating indictment of the Jewish mother as a sexual Typhoid Mary, and is not ashamed of his deeply felt affection for both his parents. But despite all those costly hours of analysis, neither has he been able to reconcile the fiercely incompatible demands of the ethical and the erotic. And his punishment for this failure, presumably, is his literal embodiment as an object of the sensuality he cannot tame, a freakish travesty of erogenous flesh.

Is Roth, then, saying, with uncharacteristic indirection, that the sexual revolution of the 60's has by now become a monstrous parody of its brave beginnings, that our culture has been surfeited with more sexual emancipation than a human being needs and more than society as a whole should tolerate? If so, this is not as divergent from Portnoy's *kvetching* as it might at first appear. As Diana Trilling shrewdly observed, "No one . . . could present us with a more traditionally sanctified system of sexual values than Portnoy. He knows just what kind of sex is wholesome and life-enhancing and what is debasing. . . ." Perhaps Philip Roth has all along been more of a nice Jewish square than readers suspected.

Now well into his forties, almost a decade older and, one would like to think, wiser than the cocky gagman of *Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth has apparently reconsidered his commitment to the "non-negotiable" extremism of the 60's about sex, moral imperatives, and the Jewish conspiracy against erotic pleasure. But while he can define his tempered judgment well enough in essays and interviews, he has been incapable of realizing it

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imaginatively as a novelist, and his books are endless rereadings and rewritings of himself, indulging a shallow sentimentality dressed up as the fruit of contemplation. Of course he has not altogether silenced the abusive snarl that was his stock-in-trade before he began to question his faith in "crude antisocial appetite." When Kepesh asks the disreputable poet Ralph Baumgarten why he has never written about his family history, he sneers:

> . . . spare me the subject of the Jewish family and its travails. . . . All that loving; all that hating; all those meals. And don't forget the *menschlichkeit*. And the baffled quest for dignity. Oh, and the *goodness*. You can't write that stuff and leave out the goodness. . . . Why bother to write that kind of stuff down? Has it not been done—and done? Do they need me too to scratch my name on the Wailing Wall?

It cannot be denied that this adds a certain nasty power to an otherwise soggy novel. When Kepesh realizes that in time he will not even want to touch his mistress, he keens: "Oh, it's stupid! Idiotic! Unfair! To be robbed like this of you! . . . And robbed by whom? It always comes down to myself." This is infantile, not reflective. It adds nothing to our understanding of the warring souls in Kepesh, for Roth seems to believe that the only two choices of being available to a grown Jewish man are Al Jolson's sonny boy or Lenny Bruce. In fact the erudite professor sounds oddly like soap opera, where people fall in and out of love as though life were a swimming pool. (So life is *not* a swimming pool.)

In *The Professor of Desire*, we find Philip Roth for once writing about people he does not mean to ridicule, does not despise and revile; they are not vulgar morons who must be mowed down with his one-liner machine gun. Yet he is temperamentally so ill at ease with all this "crapola" about love and goodness and devotion that he cannot resist the temptation, which has served him so well in the past, of reducing it all to a punitive farce. History repeats itself twice: if *The Professor of Desire* is truth, then the dreadful joke of *The Breast* must be consequence.

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Covering Vietnam

BIG STORY: HOW THE AMERICAN PRESS AND TELEVISION REPORTED AND INTERPRETED THE CRISIS OF TET 1968 IN VIETNAM AND WASHINGTON. By PETER BRAESTRUP. *Westview Press. 2 vols. 1447 pages. $50.00.*

Reviewed by PAUL H. WEAVER

THIS study of how the national press covered the Tet offensive sprawls through two weighty volumes and contains 41 appendixes, 23 enormous tables, 14 indexes, and a thousand footnotes. Whoever ventures to read it will discover it to be less a book than a lumbering melange of research notes, autobiography, mini-essays, raw data, deadpan polemic, and newsroom gossip. Even so—one almost wants to say therefore—*Big Story* is a fascinating and important account of our national press in action, and one hopes (probably in vain) that the book will receive the attentive reception which its meandering structure and long-winded exposition seem intended to discourage. It presents a comprehensive reconstruction of the facts and ideas the press conveyed to the American people about this turning point in the Vietnam war and U.S. politics. It is the first systematic, book-length analysis ever made of the content, accuracy, and political animus of a major body of national press coverage. Not least, it is a sort of confession. For the author, a Yale graduate and former Nieman fellow at Harvard, is a newsman who for twenty years made his career in the citadels of American journalism, first at *Time*, then at the New York *Herald Tribune*, the New York *Times*, and the Washington *Post*. During Tet itself he was chief of the Washington *Post*'s news bureau in Saigon.

The author's background is noteworthy because his thesis is that the national press misrepresented, in many cases quite grotesquely, virtually every aspect of the Tet offensive and its aftermath. Braestrup argues that the Tet offensive was an enormous gamble on the part of the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front (NLF) that bore an important resemblance to the U.S.-backed invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961. For at Tet the North Vietnamese and NLF surfaced a large portion of their total force and committed it to an invasion of cities and towns, apparently in the hope that they would thereby win over the populace, or cause the South Vietnamese regime to collapse, or at least force into being a coalition government that they could dominate. That effort turned out to be an utter failure. The North Vietnamese army (NVA) and Vietcong, after initial successes, were driven back and took what in the end were very severe losses. The people did not rally to their cause; indeed, they appear to have intensified their support for the Thieu-Ky regime, not least because of the North Vietnamese massacre of almost 3,000 civilians in Hué during the time that city was occupied. Tet also prompted the Saigon regime, for the first time, to arm the populace in large numbers and to increase its draft call substantially. For the South Vietnamese army, according to Braestrup, the Tet episode was a formative experience, demonstrating that, in a flat-out confrontation with the enemy, it could stay together and fight.

That, at least, was the real Tet; the journalistic version, according to Braestrup's massive analysis, was strikingly different. For the press did not portray Tet as a bold but unsuccessful gamble by the North culminating in pitched battles that the U.S. and South Vietnam sooner or later won. To the contrary, the national press depicted Tet as an unmitigated disaster that demonstrated the failure of U.S. policy and the futility of persisting in it. In the eyes of the press, the fact that the North Vietnamese and NLF could make their challenge was evidence that they had in fact won, or at least could not fail over the long run, and that our side had already lost or eventually would. Thus, in contrast to the real Tet, there was no development in the journalistic Tet, which began as a disaster for the U.S. and two months later remained a disaster.

To some extent, the press's decision to organize its coverage around the theme of American failure and futility led to—or was the result of—errors of fact. Braestrup deliberately does not make much of these, limiting himself to identifying the errors in footnotes that give the correct information without comment or, in the case of unverified reports, that observe laconically, "This remains a *Times* [or ABC, or UPI, or whatever] exclusive." But there are an awful lot of these corrective footnotes. The lead story in the New York *Times* that reported the first major attacks in Saigon on January 31, for example, contains seven mistakes of fact, according to Braestrup, three of them in the first two paragraphs alone.

Most of the mistakes, to be sure, are of little substantive importance; it isn't exactly crucial to a grasp of what happened that first day in Saigon, for example, whether the suicide squad that tried to invade the U.S. embassy had 17 or 19 members, or whether they wore South Vietnamese army uniforms or civilian clothes, to take two points on which the *Times* was in error. But some of the mistakes were material indeed. For example, in a report on the early fighting in Saigon, CBS's Don Webster showed film of the smoking remains of an allied bombing attack and located the scene "right in downtown Saigon." Actually, according to Braestrup, the film was of a street in suburban Gia Dinh; no such bombing strikes ever took place in downtown Saigon. Webster went on to comment: "It's not quite clear exactly why there had to be an air strike, almost any building

PAUL H. WEAVER, *an associate editor of* Fortune, *writes frequently about journalism and politics*

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could be struck from the ground. . . ." To which Braestrup appends this indignant footnote: "Exactly the reverse was true. Allied forces in Saigon and the Delta towns lacked powerful 'direct-fire' weapons, unlike the Marines who used the 106 mm. recoilless cannon to good effect on Hué's south side; elsewhere, for lack of alternatives, air strikes and helicopter gunships were used."

BRAESTRUP may be right not to belabor the press for its narrowly factual errors. As he explains in the title of one of his chapters, "First reports are always partly wrong." Moreover, the really important mistakes made by the press were conceptual in nature, representing a failure not of simple observation or verification, but of comprehension and judgment. Braestrup's analysis shows that the overall picture the press conveyed of Tet was marked by some astonishing imbalances. For example, as much as a quarter of all Tet coverage dealt with the siege of the Marine outpost at Khe Sanh, near the demilitarized zone. Yet Khe Sanh could not have been more unrepresentative of the overall action during Tet. It was located in a remote, rural setting, whereas most of the battles were in populated areas. Its strategic significance was uncertain, and that little was narrowly military, having to do with control of invasion and supply routes. By contrast, most of the fighting at Tet was over strategic objectives of the most obvious importance, such as control of civilian populations or the maintenance of legitimacy. Yet during the 77 days the siege lasted, the military situation at Khe Sanh was *the* focus of the media; more than any other event or battle, it served, as Walter Cronkite put it, as a "microcosm" of the entire war.

Not only was Khe Sanh grossly overcovered, according to Braestrup, but it was itself misrepresented—toward the end to the point of almost total falsification. The central theme of Khe Sanh reportage, according to Braestrup's analysis, was that for the U.S. the battle was, or would become, what Dienbienphu had been for the French, i.e., a humiliating defeat

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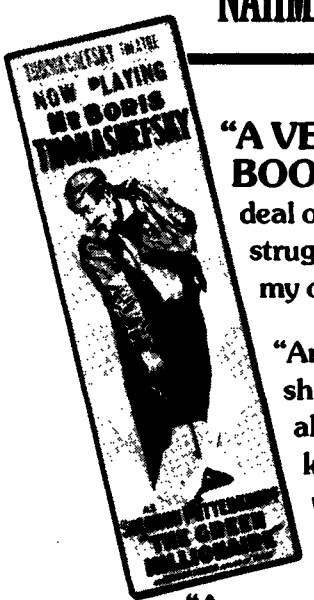

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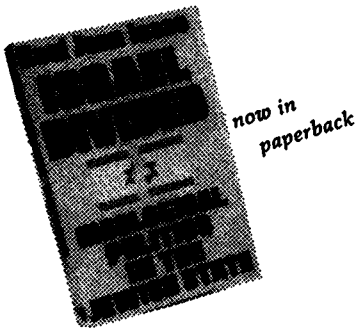

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that put a decisive end to a colonial war. The press thus presented Khe Sanh as a "disaster in the making." Its theme was that the Marines were surrounded by a powerful foe commanded by the "wily Giap," as the North Vietnamese general was often referred to, who would inexorably tighten the noose and eventually overwhelm the outpost in "human-wave" attacks. Accordingly, the press tended to depict U.S. forces as passive victims, pawns at the mercy of the enemy. For instance, of the twenty-five news photographs of Khe Sanh the New York *Times* printed during Tet, eight showed U.S. air operations; ten showed U.S. troops wounded, dead, ducking fire, or surveying enemy-inflicted damage; four showed them in noncombatant poses; and only one picture showed Marines firing back. As CBS's Murray Fromson put the prevailing interpretation of the Marines' situation: "Here, the North Vietnamese decide who lives and who dies. Every day, which planes land and which ones don't, and sooner or later they will make the move that will seal the fate of Khe Sanh."

That move, of course, was never made. Indeed, Braestrup points out that there never was much chance that it would be, principally because of overwhelming U.S. air support (at Dienbienphu in 1954 the French had little) and a relatively weak North Vietnamese effort (the artillery barrage at Khe Sanh was less than one-tenth that which devastated Dienbienphu). By mid-March, the NVA began pulling out its troops (UPI had the story but couldn't get official confirmation, and neither the *Times* nor the *Post* ran it), and at the end of that month, the U.S. mounted Operation Pegasus to relieve the outpost by ground. Yet even during this period the press kept hammering on the Dienbienphu theme. On March 18, *Newsweek* ran a cover story on "The Dusty Agony of Khe Sanh," which was accompanied by a rare editorial announcing the magazine's opposition to Johnson's war policy.

Elsewhere in the press, the horizon was constantly being scanned for new threats to Khe Sanh, however far-fetched. One day the sighting of a pair of Soviet-made jet bombers at a North Vietnamese air base 325 miles away touched off a flurry of speculation about possible enemy air attacks against the Marines; another day this possibility was magnified by a New York *Times* report of a possible secret air strip in nearby jungles from which MIG-21's could fly sorties against Khe Sanh. (No such air strip was ever found, and Braestrup describes the *Times*'s story as "the most imaginative newspaper story of the Tet period.") CBS's Jeff Gralnick articulated the prevailing view on March 29 when he reported:

> There really is no end in sight. The North Vietnamese in the hills out there beyond the fog show no inclination to pull back or attack. U.S. commanders show no inclination just yet to drive them back. So for the Marines and the Seabees and the rest here, there is nothing to do but sit and take it, just to wait, and hope they'll rotate out, leave before they join the roster of wounded and dead here.

Of this report Braestrup observes: "It was a fitting television ending. . . . Next day, in fact, the Marines began pushing out into the surrounding ground. . . . On April 1, Operation Pegasus began—against light opposition." A few days after that the siege was lifted.

THE press's coverage of Khe Sanh exemplifies, if in extreme form, the general pattern of its treatment of Tet: it insisted that Tet was a disaster for the U.S. and its allies; that it demonstrated the futility of the war; and that it reflected the superior discipline of the enemy's army, the superior ethics of his administrative cadres, his superior support among the people, his unyielding will to win, and so forth. Coverage of the South Vietnamese was based on the opposite notions, and this gave rise to some dramatic inconsistencies. For instance, the media gave intense coverage to an incident in February in which, before an audience of American news photographers and TV cameras, Saigon's chief of police shot a captured VC officer in the head, killing

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him instantly. By contrast, news of the enemy's executions of what turned out to be almost 3,000 civilians in Hué was given little play, and in some cases was balanced against South Vietnamese offenses of vastly lesser magnitude. An NBC report after Hué, for example, noted that "Hundreds of government workers were killed and thrown into temporary graves" and then went on to discuss, at greater length, the looting that had been committed by South Vietnamese (ARVN) soldiers. "The North Vietnamese army did not loot," the report pointed out.

When the North Vietnamese were doing well, during the early days of the Tet offensive, the press's principal theme was that of their strength, daring, and success. Later, as the U.S. and its allies cleaned the enemy out of its temporary strongholds, the journalistic focus shifted to the deaths and destruction the fighting had caused. The implication—sometimes made explicit—was that our efforts were futile: if we lost, we lost; if we won, we were scarcely any better off. "Destruction was a 'story,'" Braestrup observes; recovery—and victory—were not. And the destruction was typically depicted as the allies' fault. As NBC's Howard Tuckner put it on one occasion: "South Vietnamese and American military leaders decided that in order to protect most of the people, they had to kill or maim some of the people. . . . The only real losers were the people, and in this war there's nothing new about that." In a March 10 special on NBC, Frank McGee asserted that the issue facing the U.S. in the wake of the Tet offensive was whether "it's futile to destroy Vietnam in the effort to save it."

ONE could go on, but the point is sufficiently clear: the national press not only presented a distorted impression, it all but falsified what was actually going on in Vietnam during Tet. In Braestrup's view, this dismal performance is explained by the inherent limitations to which newsmen working under deadlines are subject; by the built-in routines and habits of daily journalism, e.g., the preference for dramatic events (fire, death, and so forth); by the fact that few reporters spent much time with army units in the field or knew anything in particular about war in an Asian country; and by the fact that newsmen were reacting naturally against the Johnson administration's previous assurances that the war effort was making good progress and, by implication, that everything was going swimmingly in Vietnam.

Braestrup explicitly rejects the hypothesis that ideology was a cause of the press's performance, except possibly in the case of the *Times*, some of whose staff members publicly joined an end-the-war committee during the Tet period. To Braestrup, what happened was

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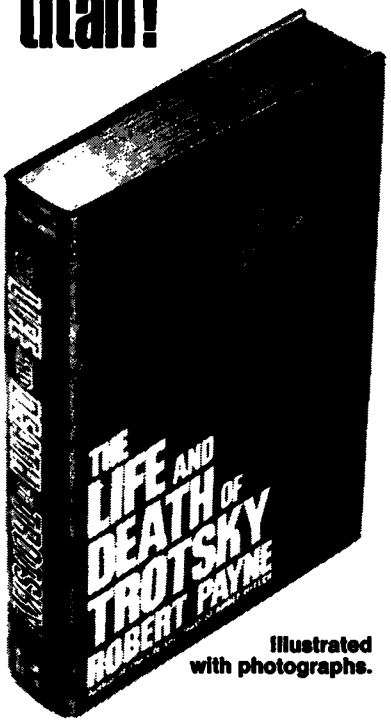

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the result of laziness, routine, and ignorance; the only actors in the drama he is prepared to censure are the news executives back in Washington and New York, who, as he argues, could and should have been more skeptical, less melodramatic, and less willing to commit their institutions to broad theories about what was going on in Vietnam before all the facts were in.

This explanation strikes me as correct as far as it goes, but insufficient. For in the end Braestrup sees the press's performance in cognitive terms only, as a simple question of knowledge. Yet while it is true that the news accounts were short on understanding, that is by no means the only respect in which they were defective. For the press did not convey any random misimpressions about Tet; it obviously was intent on conveying certain *kinds* of misimpressions. Thus, what Braestrup's exhaustive analysis uncovers is not merely an absence of understanding, it is also the presence of something else, namely, a commitment on the part of the journalistic institutions involved to a general notion—and not an unpolitical one—of what was and was not, should and should not be, going on in Vietnam and U.S. foreign policy.

News consists of facts about specific events, but it is not and cannot be limited to them; it always includes, is based on, and is aimed at articulating larger ideas about the situation at hand or the world as a whole. News, that is to say, is *story* as well as fact—and story is always critical and normative; it tells us not only what is, but also what should be. What happened at Tet is that the national press became committed to a certain story line that led to severe distortions of observable reality. The story line was one of the brutality and futility of American involvement in the war. To be sure, the coverage it gave shape to did convey certain kinds of truths—the "universal truths" that war is brutal and that nations seldom do honor to their highest values by fighting prolonged wars in strange and marginal countries. But the coverage so shaped did not convey the *specific* truth of the actual situation in Vietnam at the time of Tet, which is to say that it did not convey the kind of truth that is appropriate to journalism in a democracy, the whole purpose of which is to assist the citizenry in evaluating policy decisions in light of its considered preferences and observable realities.

In short, what Braestrup describes is a press that in effect declared its opposition to Johnson and his war and proceeded to express that opposition in the only language available to it: the language of news—of the dramatized presentation of actual events. Braestrup says that the motives behind the opposition were not ideological. What does seem clear is that the pattern of coverage his research describes represents a political act, and one whose consequences extend well beyond the issue of the war, important though it was and is. A politicized press speaking the language of news is an instrument of propaganda, and such an institution does not foster democracy, but erodes it.

Pink and White Tyranny

THE FEMINIZATION OF AMERICAN CULTURE. By ANN DOUGLAS. *Knopf. 403 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by STEVEN SCHNUR

IT HAS become a commonplace of modern literary and historical criticism to speak of the dominant role women played in cultural affairs during the middle and late 19th century. The ubiquitous cartoon of the wife dragging her reluctant husband from the office to the ballet spawned endless variants that persist today. Henry James and William Dean Howells, to mention only the most prominent of Victorian American authors, were well aware, as their letters reveal, that their audience consisted almost exclusively of women. Van Wyck Brooks, in his controversial study of Mark Twain, went so far as to claim that the feminine values of Twain's audience, as interpreted

STEVEN SCHNUR *is a graduate student in English at CUNY.*

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by the censorious Mrs. Clemens, ruined the great humorist. And much ink has been spilled in analyzing the effeminate character of those novelists who abjured the overt sexuality of their 18th-century predecessors—particularly Swift, Sterne, and Defoe—creating instead the artificial sensibility that the American philosopher George Santayana termed the "Genteel Tradition." The violent revolt of Theodore Dreiser and Stephen Crane against this delicacy (both wrote, among other things, about prostitution) inaugurated the sexual age that we associate with modern fiction.

Although Victorian prudery no longer exercises the control over literature it did during the 19th century, Ann Douglas claims in *The Feminization of American Culture* that its legacy is apparent not in the best but in the worst products of our age—in advertising, television, and magazines. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has given way to Miss America, "Teen Angel," and laundry-soap commercials that depict women mindlessly preoccupied with drivel while at the same time encouraging them to be so. But Miss Douglas's main concern is with the past and not the present; her book is a scholarly examination of the creation and proliferation of a 19th-century subculture.

IN SIMPLEST terms *The Feminization of American Culture* is about power—about the efforts of a small community of Northeastern middle-class women writers and liberal clergymen to exert influence in a society that had, she asserts, shunted them both off to one side in its race for industrial supremacy. As Henry Adams noted:

> The American woman at her best—like most other women—exerted great charm on the man. . . . When closely watched, she seemed making a violent effort to follow the man who had turned his mind and hand to mechanics. . . . He could not run his machine and woman too, he must leave her, even though his wife, to find her own way. . . .

Find it she did, claims Miss Douglas, through an alliance of church and literature that set the prevailing moral tone of Victorian America and may even have sown the seeds of modern American mass culture. Miss Douglas says of her subjects: "They were rightly insecure about their position in the broader society; they sought to gain indirect and compensatory control. . . . Under the sanction of sentimentalism, lady and clergyman were able to cross the cruel lines laid down by sexual stereotyping." The result was a bifurcated society consisting of a female-dominated realm of "culture" and a masculine realm of business. During the course of the last century, she claims, the larger society succumbed to the "influence" of the subculture, mass-producing the

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trivia that came to characterize the Victorian era.

Miss Douglas devotes the first two of her book's three sections to this progression. She begins by examining the decline and subsequent conjoining of women and clergy, attempting to account on the one hand for the dissolution of Calvinism and subsequent rise of a popular but less rigorous Unitarianism, and on the other for the changing role of women at the start of the Industrial Revolution. After mapping the convergence of these two disenfranchised classes, she devotes her second section to an exploration of a wide range of Victoriana from the emerging sentimentalization of death to the creation of the Sunday School movement, ladies' magazines, pulp novels, and mass consumerism. Finally, she analyzes the lives of the transcendentalist Margaret Fuller and the novelist Herman Melville, interpreting their works in light of a subculture they rejected but which exercised significant control over them by shaping the tastes of their audience.

ALTHOUGH Miss Douglas means in this book to argue for the "intimate connection between critical aspects of Victorian culture and modern mass culture," her focus is really upon what Harriet Beecher Stowe termed the "Pink and White Tyranny" or what Miss Douglas herself calls "the drive of 19th-century American women to gain power through the exploitation of their feminine identity as their society defined it." Her thesis is a provocative one, but it seriously overemphasizes the importance and influence of the trivia that a small community of women immersed themselves in, and formulates a historical interpretation on the basis of a culture's refuse, perpetuating the very images the culture has discarded.

While Miss Douglas expertly analyzes her "control group" of thirty women writers and thirty ministers, and while she accounts in part for the phenomenon of the "Genteel Tradition," as soon as she moves from the particular to the general she succumbs to stereotype. Her myopic vision fails to incorporate the numerous *political* activities of women during this period, particularly in the areas of abolition and universal suffrage (see Henry James's *The Bostonians*). Such women, while also generally from Northeast middle-class families, shared few common goals with the idle matrons who Miss Douglas would have us believe typified American women.

In her analysis of women and clergy, moreover, Miss Douglas is unable to identify the critical catalysts that precipitated the changing roles and values of both minorities. Clerical "disestablishment," the legislated separation of church and state prohibiting the use of tax revenues for religious purposes, forced the Protestant Church, says Miss Douglas, "into aggressive and largely successful proselytizing" to insure its survival in a competitive society. But this accounts only partially for the shift from a paternal Calvinism to a "feminine" Unitarianism of wider appeal; the fact is that the shift began long before the Church was forced to sell itself. So too in her discussion of the rise of women writers, Miss Douglas inadequately accounts for the psychology underlying their "tyrannical" influence as well as that underlying the failure of women to infiltrate other fields as they did the once male-dominated realms of writing and teaching. The question again must be asked: why did a small class of women wish to promulgate all that was petty and insignificant in feminine society at the very moment their politically active neighbors were demonstrating that not just influence but power itself could be won by women?

In short, this book, while exhaustively researched and well written, leaves some important questions unanswered and overemphasizes the importance of others. One feels, indeed, that today's popular nostalgia for trivia, a nostalgia that has among other things resurrected television kinescopes and comic books of the 1950's, has exerted no small influence on this examination of Victoriana. Perhaps it is just as well, then, that Miss Douglas's promise to link modern mass culture—a consistently vague term throughout the book—and Victorian society remains unfulfilled,

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for it would require even more patience than she has shown in researching the underside of Victorian culture to wade through the morass of modern immemorabilia that had best be forgotten.

Urban Terrorists

HITLER'S CHILDREN: THE STORY OF THE BAADER-MEINHOF TERRORIST GANG. By JILLIAN BECKER. *Lippincott. 322 pp. $12.50.*

CARLOS: PORTRAIT OF A TERRORIST. By COLIN SMITH. *Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 312 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by ERIC M. BREINDEL

TERRORISM has become a fashionable subject during the past few years, but only a few authors have attempted to explain the phenomenon or to place it in any sort of historical and/or political context. Both these books attempt to do just that, with varying degrees of success.

In *Hitler's Children,* Jillian Becker, a South African-born British novelist, traces the origins of Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang, the band of urban terrorists who made headlines in the early 70's by robbing banks, setting department stores on fire, and placing bombs in supermarkets and in parked cars—all in the name of protesting "fascism" in the German Federal Republic. Much of the book is taken up with biographical accounts of the principal members of this group, which called itself the *"Rote Armee Fraktion"* (Red Army Faction)—the same group that recently kidnapped West German industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer. Like so many chronicles of the period, it reads like fiction.

The story begins in 1967, a year of mass student demonstrations throughout Germany against such things as the Vietnam war, the Shah of Iran, and the Axel Springer publishing empire. In that year Andreas Baader, a youthful drifter

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ERIC M. BREINDEL, a recent graduate of Harvard College, is now studying international relations at the London School of Economics. This is his first appearance in COMMENTARY.

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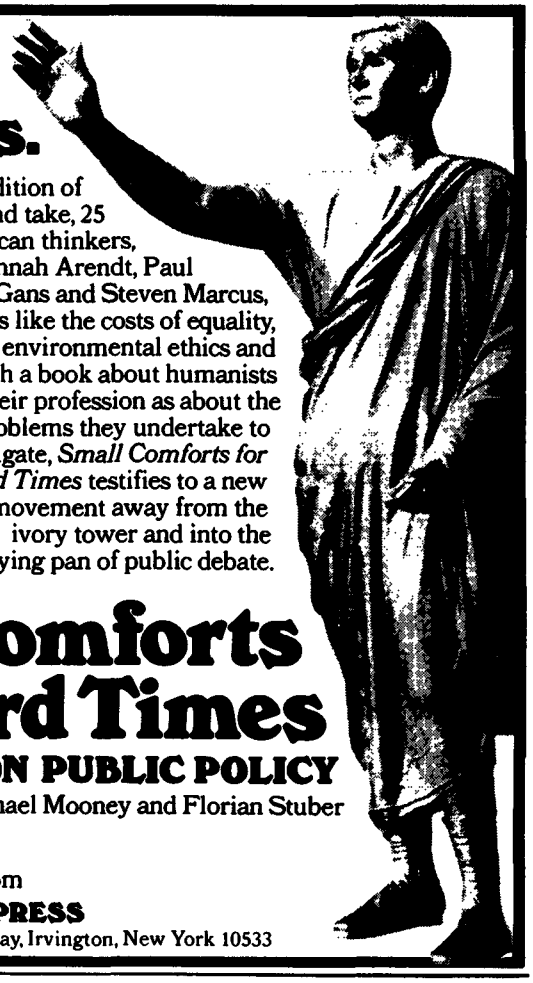

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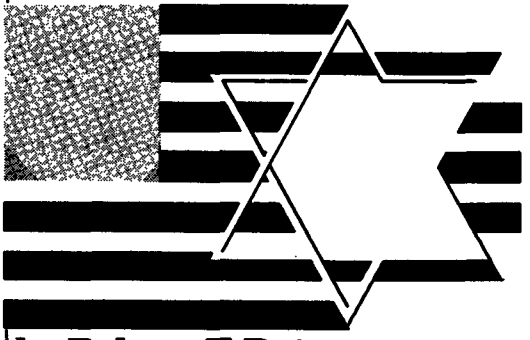

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of no particular political persuasion, whose father had been killed on the Russian front, took up with Gudrun Ensslin, a student radical living off the stipend of a prestigious national scholarship. The daughter of a solid German family of liberal inclinations, Gudrun Ensslin had been one of the planners of a Berlin student protest against the visiting Shah of Iran. A student, Benno Ohnesorg, had been shot and killed by the Berlin police in the course of this demonstration. Though not himself a radical, the dead Ohnesorg became a hero of the German Left, and it was in his name that Gudrun Ensslin shortly thereafter abandoned her husband and infant and went off with Baader to Frankfurt. Here the two of them teamed up with another couple to set fire to a department store in protest against the "consumer state." They were promptly arrested for arson.

The ensuing trial became a *cause célèbre,* thanks to its coverage in the pages of *Konkret,* a glossy journal combining pornography with left-wing politics. The author of the stories was Ulrike Meinhof, a founding editor of the magazine. An orphan who had been brought up in the home of a prominent German historian and political activist, she was already something of a celebrity in Germany, having twice been sued for slander by German Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauss. The articles in *Konkret* turned the four defendants into heroes, and later—when the four fled Germany to avoid serving their sentences—Ulrike Meinhof retained close contact with them. Eventually she left her husband, also a *Konkret* editor, and her two small daughters, to join up with Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, a Berlin lawyer named Horst Mahler, and a small group of others to form what would be known as the Baader-Meinhof gang. Schooled in terrorism at a Jordan-based training camp of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the group returned to Germany and began the rampage of bombings, holdups, and murders which ended some two years later with the arrest of almost all the Baader-Meinhof members.

Miss Meinhof, the ideologue of the band, who spent hours preparing its manifestoes, ultimately committed suicide in prison after the failure of an attempt to secure the prisoners' release by a group calling itself "The Movement of the Second of June" (Ohnesorg had been shot on that date). In that attempt, the German embassy in Stockholm was occupied; hostages, including the German ambassador, were held at gunpoint; and demands were issued that the Baader-Meinhof prisoners be freed and flown to safety. These demands were rejected, and in the ensuing impasse one of the terrorists accidentally triggered an explosive device, blowing up the embassy building, most of his comrades, and himself. The surviving hostages escaped unharmed.

Two of the group's members who had escaped the police dragnet were killed by Israeli commandos at Entebbe airport in Uganda last summer. Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and two other gang members recently committed suicide in prison after a German commando raid on a plane hijacked to Somalia.

Carlos, the story of the Venezuelan-born master terrorist who worked closely with Baader-Meinhof members and with many other groups of armed revolutionaries operating in Europe, is a less satisfactory narrative, if only because it is still unfinished. The author, a reporter for the London *Observer,* reconstructs by means of interviews with family, associates, and police officers, the transformation of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez from the pampered son of a highly successful corporate lawyer (the father, a Communist, named his three sons Ilich, Lenin, and Vladimir) into the world's most wanted terrorist.

It was at some point after his expulsion from Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow that Sanchez became a terrorist operative, though under whose auspices (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine? the KGB?) remains unclear. Smith concentrates instead on following Sanchez's, or Carlos's, trail as he commutes between European capitals and the Middle East. In the course of those travels, he

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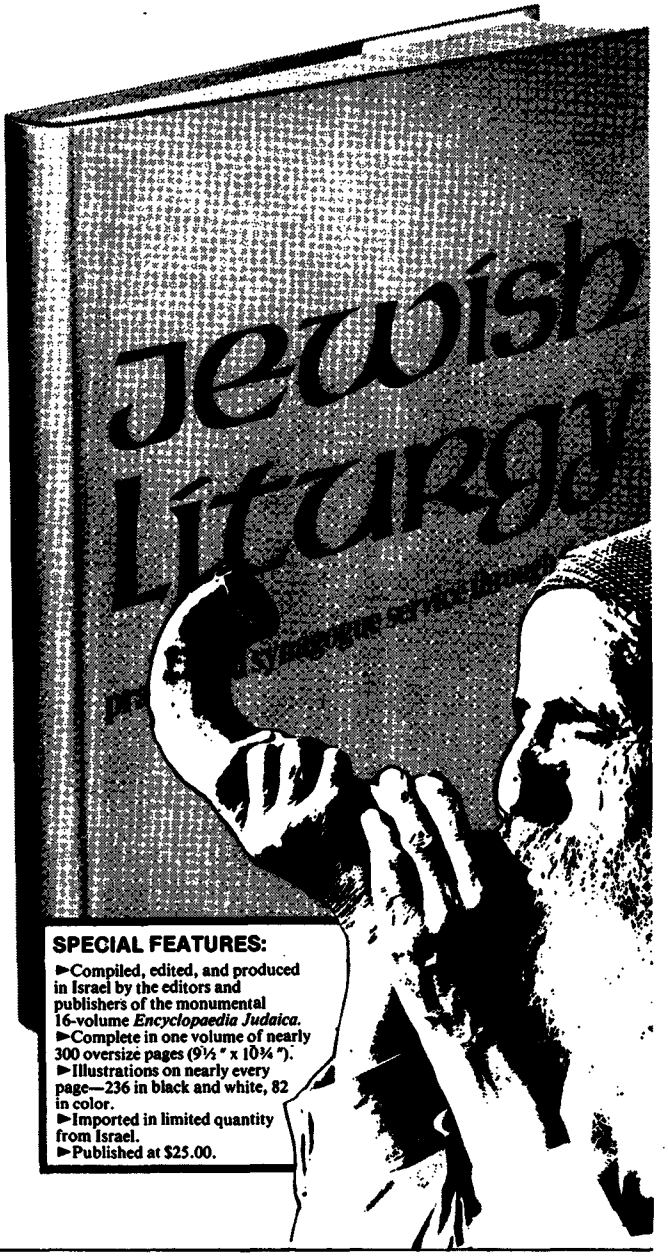

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has planted bombs in Jewish-owned stores in Paris; shot and wounded the British Zionist leader, Joseph Sieff, in London; organized an assault on the train carrying Russian Jews with exit-visas to the Israeli-run transit camp near Schönau; and, finally, led the raid on the OPEC ministers' conference in Vienna. This chronicle of mayhem is both a testament to Carlos's own skill as a terrorist and a sad comment on police incompetence. Yet, for whom he works, and what his aim is, remain a mystery.

WHAT motivates a student activist to become a hijacker of airplanes on behalf of the Basques or the Palestinians? What are the roots of contemporary urban terrorism? Of the two authors, Jillian Becker does attempt to deal with these larger issues; in fact, she offers a theory about terrorism in West Germany. In her view, there is a generational struggle peculiar to the German situation which expresses itself in the form of groups like Baader-Meinhof. Their outrages are part of a backlash against the National Socialist state of the previous generation. Guilt, of a consuming nature, and the bomb-throwers' psychological need to identify themselves as victims of the state, are pervasive in the lore of present-day terrorists in the Federal Republic. "We are the Jews of today—" the oft-repeated and nonsensical slogan of the late 60's—illustrates this desire of some on the radical Left to assume the exalted status of victims.

Miss Becker identifies a possible cause of this syndrome in the denazification proceedings that took place under American auspices during the postwar period. It was this process, she contends, which led some of those educated after the war to see the world in terms of black and white, fascist and anti-fascist. Miss Becker claims that from the reeducation programs under the Occupation, students learned to regard every member of the older generation as "fascist by default, unless an individual . . . could prove himself otherwise." But since the fascist state was long since dead by the time these students reached adulthood, the "consumer state"—the new Germany of the Economic Miracle—became their target.

There are obvious problems with this explanation of the roots of West German terrorism. In the first place, the vast majority of today's German students were educated long *after* the denazification procedures had ceased to be in effect. Secondly, if Miss Becker's psychological analysis were correct, one would have expected many more young leftists to have gone the route of terrorism; neurotic guilt does not, however, in most cases, turn into political action of the kind followed by the Baader-Meinhof gang. Finally, although many of Miss Becker's comments on the psychological makeup of the terrorists are acute, they suffer, curiously, from her inability to restrain her own hatred of the group and her disdain for their emotional infantilism—a disdain which expresses itself in Miss Becker's relentlessly sarcastic tone.

Not that the subject lacks opportunity for sarcasm. Baader himself was a political imbecile, the group as a whole had no coherent ideological line, and most of the members were products of a leisure class that knew nothing of workers and cared even less about them. Indeed, as Miss Becker points out, the catalyst for the formation of the Baader-Meinhof gang was not some sudden and overwhelming desire to smash the state, but rather the bourgeois emotional attachment of Gudrun Ensslin to Andreas Baader. Still, sarcasm, however appropriate, does not serve to elucidate the phenomenon altogether. Miss Becker raises any number of fascinating questions in her account, but unfortunately abandons them.

Colin Smith, for his part, seems to have only one major question on his mind: is Carlos an employee of the KGB? This too is an interesting question, but in the end he is unable to come to a firm conclusion—other than that Carlos, at this stage of the game, may well be in business for himself, giving rather than taking orders. And so, aside from a cursory examination of how the international terrorist network operates, Smith has little to offer. Nor is he any more helpful on the question of who profits from Car-

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los, though he himself raises it. Political issues, even of the most elementary nature, are apparently beyond his scope. Still, if one is looking for a good cops-and-robbers story, particularly one in which the criminals lead the cops around by the nose, *Carlos* will certainly do.

Hero's Story

WARTIME. By MILOVAN DJILAS. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 470 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by STEPHEN MILLER

Wartime is a compelling story of civil war, of the internecine fighting among Yugoslavs of differing loyalties that began after the German invasion of April 6, 1941. In that "deadly vortex," as Djilas calls it, Serb fought against Croat, Muslim against Christian, village against village, clan against clan. It is also a story of resistance and liberation, of the efforts of the Communist Partisans under Tito to defeat the Nazis while at the same time fighting against various fascist and non-fascist collaborators.

Djilas, who was a close aide of Tito's during the war, suggests that the "official" Titoist version of the Partisans' heroic exploits is, if not exactly wrong, then at least a distortion and simplification of what actually took place. Though he honors the courage of the Partisans, he also knows that those years provide material not only for a national epic but also for a darker saga—on the order of *Macbeth*, perhaps—a tale of suspicions and betrayals, where all of Yugoslavia "floated upon a wild and violent sea," a tale that focuses less on the struggle against the invader than on the flaring up of inveterate hatreds. "Revenge," Djilas once said in speaking of Montenegro, his native land, "is its greatest delight and glory." The Yugoslavia of *Wartime* is Montenegro writ large.

The most notorious of the revengers were the Ustashi—Croatian fascists who were bent on slaugh-

STEPHEN MILLER works for the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington.

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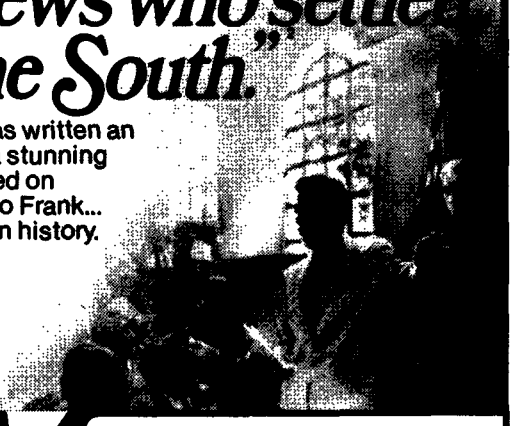

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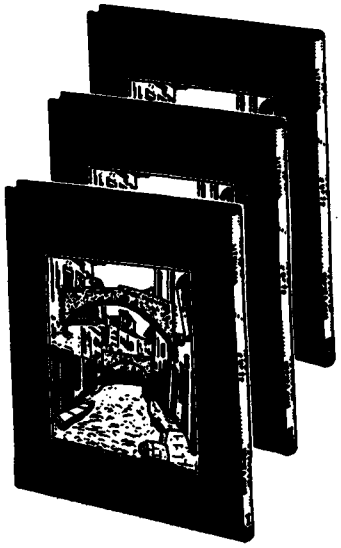

tering as many Jews and Serbs as they could get their hands on. Ranged against them in the civil war were both the Chetniks (Serbians loyal to the government-in-exile in London) and the Partisans (Communists loyal to the Soviet Union), though to speak of fascists, loyalists, and Communists in this connection is not quite accurate, since the actualities of the situation turned peasants into Chetniks one day, and into Partisans the next.

All did their share of killing, so that it is hard to estimate how many of the 1.7 million Yugoslavs who died during these years were killed by fellow countrymen, and how many by Germans. In Djilas's family alone, one brother was killed by a Montenegrin militiaman fighting under the Italians, another was tortured and killed by a member of the Serbian police working with the Gestapo, a pregnant sister was murdered by Chetniks, and Djilas's father was shot by an Albanian nationalist. As Djilas says, "There is immeasurably more bad blood in a fratricidal war than in any war between countries."

Caught up in this infernal machine, the Partisans sometimes behaved as ruthlessly as the Ustashi and the Chetniks. But unlike the others, they directed most of their energies toward killing Germans rather than their fellow-countrymen. As a result, they eventually gained the upper hand, winning support from the Allies and allaying the suspicions of the peasants, who had at first distrusted their well-advertised association with the Soviet Union.

IN RECOUNTING all this—including the major role he played in the Partisans' abortive negotiations with the Germans during the course of the war—Djilas has given us an important historical document that illuminates one of the darkest and most confusing episodes of the World War II period. But *Wartime* is more than a historical memoir; it is also a disinterested meditation on what Djilas calls a "historical tragedy." Acknowledging the madness of war and continually making us aware of its "bloody and insane devices," Djilas nevertheless refuses to indulge in facile anti-war

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pieties. Under certain conditions, he says, making war is a responsible and just action; what is more, it often brings out the best (as well as the worst) in people. "Some men," Djilas says, "would never show all they are capable of, were it not for war." If part of this book's power lies in the unvarnished tale itself—the story of the Partisans' long march to escape encirclement by the Nazis—part lies also in Djilas's ability to rescue from oblivion men and women who conducted themselves honorably under intolerable conditions—not only fellow Partisans but also individual Chetniks and Italians. Djilas even speaks of the heroism of the German army in retreat. Only for the Ustashi does he reserve complete contempt.

Praising the many brave individuals he encountered during those years, Djilas is also praising himself, for he is clearly proud of his own war record. Indeed, one of the most attractive things about this memoir is the way in which the author's sense of his own dignity shines through, untainted by pomposity, self-righteousness, or vindictiveness. Djilas avoids the common autobiographical strategy —invented by Augustine and perfected by Rousseau—of attacking oneself in order to make oneself look better. Though he does criticize some of his actions, he never parades his anguish or guilt.

If Djilas does not go in for self-laceration, he also does not go in for punishing others. He is, in fact, remarkably generous toward the Partisan leaders—men, after all, who subsequently became his bitter enemies. Though he does judge men for their particular actions, there is a sense in which Djilas—as both actor and chorus in this tragedy—feels that those caught in the net of the civil war were acted upon, were passive victims of an inexorable fate. Describing a particularly ruthless act of the Partisans, for example, he says that "everyone was struck dumb by the reality of what they had helped to create. It was as if something terrible had happened to them." And, as befits the recollection of tragedy, Djilas is cautious about straining after conclusions, about trundling out half-baked Nietzschean reflections on man, war, violence, etc., the kind of rhetoric that marred his own earlier autobiographical work, *Land Without Justice*, and that pervades the work of that other warrior-writer, André Malraux.

Finally, then, *Wartime* is a book about a hero, for if anyone deserves to be called heroic it is Djilas. He has spent more than twelve years in jail—three years before the war, when he was tortured for his Communist convictions, and more than nine years after, when the Partisans imposed their own brand of tyranny on Yugoslavia and he was relegated to unperson status because of his attacks upon the "new class." Djilas is proud of his ability to stand up well under torture, but he is even prouder of his civil courage—the courage, as he says in *Memoir of a Revolutionary*, "to defend one's own opinions and ideas to the bitter end. . . ."

And yet there is something about the career of this remarkable man—novelist and revolutionary, guerrilla fighter and autobiographer, vice president of Yugoslavia and embattled anti-Communist—that should give us pause. At the end of *Wartime*, Djilas does reach after a conclusion, and it is a puzzling one. Reflecting upon his disillusionment with revolutionary idealism, he says that "with my present outlook, I would not have been able to do what I had done then," and then goes on to voice the hope that "in the end monolithic ideological revolutions will cease, even though they have roots in idealism and idealists." But what, given the realities of the Yugoslav civil war, *would* he have done then? Does he mean that he would not have joined the Partisans? Or does he mean that he would not have been such an unquestioning Communist—one who, as he ruefully admits in *Conversations With Stalin*, "referred many times in discussions to the crystal clarity of his [Stalin's] style, the penetration of his logic, and the harmony of his commentaries. . ."?

Wartime is a great book, an extraordinarily balanced, restrained, and judicious work of autobiography and history, but Djilas—we should keep in mind—did not reach

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his "present outlook" until his middle or late thirties. If such a decent, sensible, courageous, and intelligent man could have been a fanatical Stalinist for such a long time, what hopes can we really entertain that ideological messianism will ever cease?

Of Drugs & Bureaucrats

AGENCY OF FEAR. By EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN. *Putnam. 352 pp. $9.95.*

Reviewed by SETH CROPSEY

MANY newspapermen are called "investigative reporters" these days, but their "investigations" generally consist in printing leaks handed to them by one group of bureaucrats trying to further their own interests against another group of bureaucrats. In Edward Jay Epstein's case, however, the term "investigative reporter" really does seem appropriate.

Epstein has often uncovered material that no one else even dreamed existed, and he has used this material—in *Inquest, News from Nowhere,* and many essays—to illuminate important public matters ranging from the John F. Kennedy assassination to the Black Panthers. In his new book, *Agency of Fear,* Epstein turns his investigative talents to a previously unreported story involving the efforts of the Nixon administration to do something about drug abuse in the United States, and the result is a dismal reminder of Nixon and a fascinating glimpse into how the Washington bureaucracy operates.

Having made law-and-order a key issue in 1968, Nixon wanted to be able to report a decrease in street crime by the 1972 elections. Yet it is hard for a President to do anything about mugging, burglary, and rape—the sorts of crime people fear most—because responsibility for enforcing the laws rests with local officials. The administration therefore launched a publicity campaign to underline its tough stand on crime; the electorate remained largely unimpressed. Next came a proposal to restrain crime in the only place where local law enforcement *is* a federal concern—Washington, D.C. Nixon directed Egil Krogh, whom he had placed in charge of the law-and-order issue, to "stop crime in the District of Columbia." Krogh, later famous for his role in the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, did his best, but the task was an impossible one. He then tried to come up with some new ideas.

One suggestion seemed especially promising. It aimed to pare away crime statistics by cutting the supply of imported heroin. Since addicts commit the lion's share of urban crime, reducing the addict population would cause the crime rate to plunge. Or so the reasoning went. But things are not so simple. Epstein looks at the history of addiction to see whether it does produce waves of crime. He finds that where addicts have criminal records, their crimes, "without exception," precede their addiction. Many criminals use heroin, but "there is little persuasive evidence suggesting that it is the *cause* rather than an effect in most cases." Studies also show that addicts prefer low-risk crimes such as shoplifting and stealing from parked vehicles. (Lessening the chances of being caught is important, since going to jail obviously makes it more difficult to get drugs.)

The administration was unaware of all this. Krogh saw an issue which the President might influence, since it is federal authority that prevents heroin from entering the country. He brought his case to John Ehrlichman who worried about the absence of research but decided anyway that a war on narcotics would be the only way to lower crime statistics by 1972.

The first stage of the "war" was an assault on international drug traffic, which aimed to scuttle foreign narcotics rings and snap their transit routes to the United States. Nixon set up Task Force One, a joint effort of the Justice Depart-

SETH CROPSEY *is a reporter/researcher at* Fortune.

In 1929, Richard Strauss, future President of Hitler's State Music Council, admitted "My period of creating operas has come to a close." That was before he met Stefan Zweig, a Jew.

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ment's Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) and the Treasury's Customs Bureau. In its short, energetic life, Task Force One caused six-hour delays at the United States-Mexico border and subsequent loss of employment for Mexicans who worked on the American side. Relations between the two countries soured, and, as Krogh repoted to Ehrlichman, the efforts of Task Force One had no effect on drug traffic. Then there was an Ad Hoc Committee on Drugs. The Committee chose Turkey, with its high dependence on American aid, as the best spot to procure "dramatic results," by curtailing the opium business. The result, however, was that, for a period that coincided with the U.S. election campaign, less than 8 per cent of the world's total opium product was prevented from being cultivated in Turkish fields.

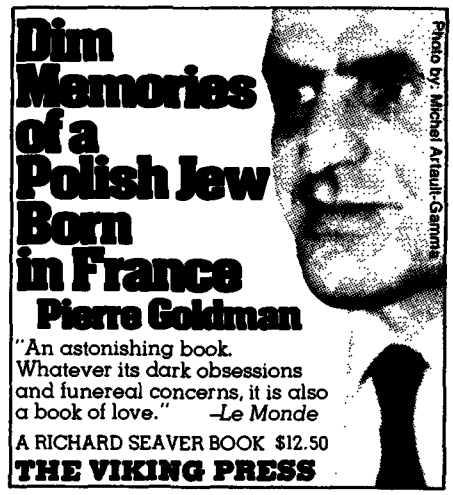
So far, the administration had not been able to lower crime rates. Crime had actually gone up slightly. Nixon's men saw their dreams trampled in bureaucratic hurly-burly as strife among agencies with a stake in treating addiction—there were nine of them—became ever sharper. In 1971 they initiated a plan to unite all government treatment programs in one White House office. Simultaneously, a hard-sell media campaign was planned to enliven public concern over the heroin threat. Rumors of an enormous narcotics epidemic seeped into the papers. Nixon called ambassadors home for urgent meetings. And, contrary to the findings of its own commissioned study, the White House announced that heroin addiction was increasing wildly along with the crime it supposedly caused. Voters were indeed frightened by this "drug menace," and an alarmed Congress poured money into narcotics enforcement.

ALL for naught. To turn fear into political capital, people had to become aware of the administration's narcotics-enforcement campaign, and they were not. Krogh hoped that a passel of drug arrests would correct this, but the Justice Department declined to cooperate. Enforcement officials, including Attorney General John Mitchell, had long since understood that mass arrests of small-time pushers only encouraged a corrupt harmony between informers and agents.

At this point the ever resourceful G. Gordon Liddy proposed to establish a White House office with its own police powers. *It* could make the arrests needed to convince people of the administration's resolve. Liddy's plan had an extra feature. The new office would be a cover for investigating leaks that had lately become a torrent. Nixon would not trust this task to the FBI or CIA, and had already tried, in vain, to get around them by setting up his own investigative organ. Liddy's plan, by concentrating on narcotics, sidestepped the jealousy of the FBI and did not require legislative assent since it was to be purely a matter of White House organization. Nixon approved and issued an executive order in January 1972 creating the Office of Drug Abuse and Law Enforcement (ODALE), under the direction of Myles Ambrose, a former New York lawyer.

Money came from funds Congress had intended for the assistance of local police. Lawyers, investigators, and specialists were hired or requisitioned from BNDD, Customs, the IRS—five hundred within one month. (The CIA refused to supply agents for a domestic intelligence-gathering unit.) To obtain a good-looking record of arrests, they executed no-knock search warrants left and right, suffering a bad press for an occasional break-in at the wrong address. But the new office did not live up to their hopes, and Krogh then went ahead with plans for it to absorb the narcotics-enforcement authority remaining in BNDD, Customs, and the IRS. The finished product would be a major government agency, different from others with investigative powers only because Nixon would control it directly. This plan looked like a winner. To top things off, J. Edgar Hoover finally died and Nixon had a chance for some real pull at the FBI. He chose L. Patrick Gray, a former campaign office manager, as director.

Then the Watergate break-in su-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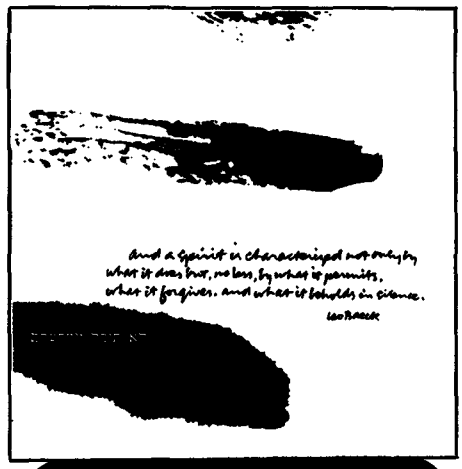

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pervened and all the narcotics-war/drug-agency restructuring plans exploded in the administration's face. Bureaucrats whom the White House had threatened, slighted, outmaneuvered, or dispossessed did their best to get even. CIA director Richard Helms, who could have asked the FBI to stop its Watergate investigation, did not. FBI chieftains, galled by Gray's appointment, leaked information about the White House-Watergate connection. IRS bureaucrats repaid the White House for swallowing up their agents and power by spilling Nixon's damning tax returns into print.

Still, in July 1973, the narcotics superagency known as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) actually came into existence. Congress was not about to vote down a major anti-narcotics measure. DEA had the cherished intelligence powers it was conceived to wield and the talent to do much more, but its authors were disgraced and mostly powerless. The conglomerate DEA buzzed off aimlessly in intra- and interbureau bickering. What Nixon might have done with DEA remains a question we may only guess at.

THE reporters who covered the Watergate and related stories are often credited with hard work and shrewd insights. Why did that work and insight fail to uncover the sensational story told here? The answer is that people in the know were not talking—certainly not people in ODALE/DEA, who also were the only ones who knew of the shady plans. The point is that since investigative reporters cannot subpoena witnesses or discourage perjury, they write at the pleasure of bureaucrats who dribble out information to suit themselves.

What suited the bureaucrats is the real subject of Epstein's book. The bureaucrats, entirely for reasons of self-preservation, opposed Nixon all the way in his drug-agency plans and played a quiet but vigorous part in undoing him. Since credit for exposing Nixon usually goes to others, this is news; but the bureaucracy should not be applauded for its resistance to the President. He wanted things his way, and they wanted things theirs.

The really ominous message of Epstein's book, whatever one might think of Nixon, is that the bureaucracy was almost bound to win. In fact, not only did it win, but it emerged in fine shape and is growing like a weed. Compared even to Richard Nixon, this unrestrained growth and increasingly independent power of the federal bureaucracy would seem to pose by far the greater threat to our system of government.

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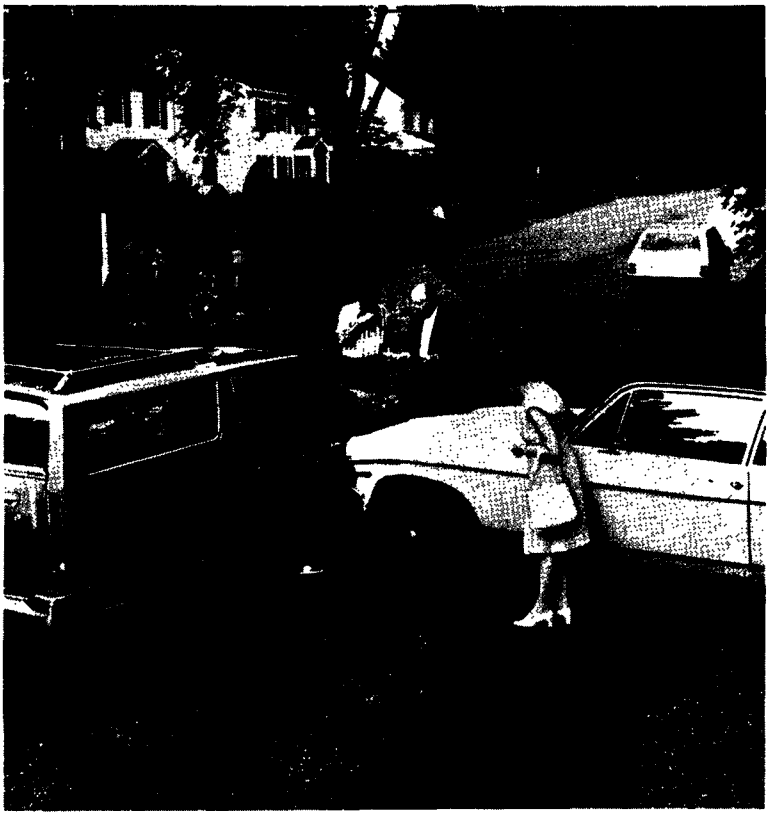
NO-FAULT IS TOO GOOD AN IDEA NOT TO IMPROVE UPON IT.

No-fault was the first real innovation in the sticky field of settling automobile claims.

The people liked it; we liked it; the Department of Transportation liked it.



Each state (16 at latest count containing 60% of all insured vehicles) that adopted it varied the rules according to its local needs.

And that worked out for the best, too.

If something could be done to make no-fault better, most people agree that it's in raising the no-fault limit.

What with inflation, and rising costs in general, a higher threshold would mean more claims would be settled more quickly. And possibly reduce costs for everyone.

What do you think? We at The Travelers would like to know. Just write our Office of Consumer Information, One Tower Square, Hartford, Conn. 06115. Or dial, toll-free, 800-243-0191. In Connecticut, call collect, 277-6565.

THE TRAVELERS

Raising our voice, not just our rates.

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